

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

THE
DEFENCE
of the
EMPIRE

by
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The Unseen Assassins,
etc.



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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

WHAT THIS BOOK IS ABOUT	-	-	PAGE II
-------------------------	---	---	------------

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS THE EMPIRE?

Does its defence mean defence of the right to exploit subject peoples or provinces? If so our youngsters will not die on its behalf. The retention of old words, though the conditions they describe have long since passed, tends badly to distort our thought. The process of 'de-imperialisation'. What is its economic interpretation? Shall we re-distribute imperialism, or end it? A note on the influence of monarchy in this process of 'de-imperialisation' - - - - -

17

CHAPTER III

WHAT THEN DO WE DEFEND?

Though we do not 'own' our empire we have an interest in the preservation of order in the area it covers, in preventing that area being closed against us in an economic sense by passing into other hands, and in preventing the use of its resources as power

against us. Colonies of doubtful value in peace, may be a source of material, human and inanimate, in war-time. The co-operation of independent communities which the Commonwealth facilitates aids in the defence of scattered democracies as against the mass power of dictatorships which can impose unity. The dangers of unworkable alternatives to imperialism. The solution is neither a disintegrating nationalism nor a multiplication of imperialisms by redistribution - - - - 36

CHAPTER IV

THE POLITICAL CONDITIONS OF EFFECTIVE DEFENCE

Defence consists not merely in the possession of the material instruments, guns, but in the assurance that the guns will shoot in the right direction. This non-material element of defence is curiously neglected: The same public which will get hysterical over an alleged shortage of guns or planes or ships will be indifferent to a political change which may result in shifting over whole armies or navies from our side to a prospective enemy's, 'counting two on a division'. Further, no power however great can deter the prospective aggressor unless he believes that the power will be used against him, a fact which is the main unlearned lesson of the Great War. Commitments and the last War. We may well at times decrease our liabilities by increasing our obligations. Alliances are indispensable, but they must not be of the pre-War type. What kind they must be - - - - -

CHAPTER V

PEACE AND THE POLICY OF RETREAT

PAGE

Nations put defence before peace. The two can only be combined by giving power to a principle (e.g. third party judgment) which will protect both parties to a dispute. Constant retreat of one will not secure this. What litigant convinced of his rightness would submit to law if sure that he could of his own force impose his view on the other party? Sometimes submission to violence makes growth of the law's power impossible -

79

CHAPTER VI

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

The cumulative effect of the policy adopted by Great Britain during the last seven years in the case of the Manchurian, Abyssinian, Rhineland and Spanish affairs and of the German effort to re-create a European hegemony, can only be appreciated by considering the story as a whole; taking into account the effect which 'imperialist' opinion, as expressed in Britain in each of those cases, must have upon the policy of foreign militarist states in future crises; and by noting the effect upon our relations with America, especially as bearing upon Britain's exercise of sea power. The new attitude to German hegemony reverses the policy of the War. Can it be reconciled with any system of imperial security or with any system of peace? - - - - -

88

CHAPTER VII

A NEW BALANCE OF POWER?

PAGE

One rational explanation of our attitude towards Japan, Italy and Germany is that the growing power of Russia imposes upon us a new orientation in the pursuit of a Balance of Power policy. The possibilities of a new 'balance' based on supporting the Have-Not states as against Russia are here considered - - - - -

188

CHAPTER VIII

WHY THE NEW JOHN BULL?

What is the ultimate explanation of the fact that so much of British opinion adopts towards other nations guilty of aggressions which worsen the defensive position of the Empire, an attitude of 'jubilation' which would have been utterly inexplicable before the War? If the commonest explanation – that this attitude is dictated by fear of Moscow Communism and 'world revolution' – is correct, then clearly it is a fear now completely out of date, which disregards the facts and ignores the changes of the last twenty years - - - - -

198

CHAPTER IX

TOWARDS A COHERENT POLICY

If certain principles animate our policy, the machinery and the name we give it are relatively unimportant. The broad principles are clear and are here indicated - - - - -

211

CONTENTS – *continued*

CHAPTER X

MARGINAL NOTES

PAGE

This chapter is in the nature of an Appendix dealing with specific points of misunderstanding and confusion as they have arisen in public (mainly newspaper) discussion. Because the real enemy is confusion and misunderstanding, these notes on specific points, even though covered elsewhere in the book, may prove of use to the reader - -

217

CONTENTS – *continued*

CHAPTER X

MARGINAL NOTES

PAGE

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217

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

CHAPTER I

WHAT THIS BOOK IS ABOUT

THE purpose of this book is first, to inquire whether the direction taken by British foreign policy during the last decade or so is compatible with the continued security of the British Empire, or with peace; secondly, to call attention to the mood which has accompanied the prevailing tendency of policy; and thirdly, to indicate an alternative policy of defence and peace.

The psychological factor as revealed this last few years is, in an ultimate sense, perhaps the most important, for it indicates a change in the nature of underlying motive; a shift in that scale of fundamental values which fixes the character and determines the conduct of nations. It has already produced results in British policy which would have been regarded as utterly inexplicable before the War; a line of conduct for which Britain's history shows no precedent; and has already profoundly modified the distribution of power throughout the world and begun to reshape it politically along new lines and to new ends.

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

Without some explanation of this change of mood or motive, no calculation as to the future course of policy, or as to the relative feasibility of one course as against another, is possible. Yet the change here discussed has provoked astonishingly little comment. Only very occasionally does one see a casual reference to it; while those who see international events as still shaped by the motives and values of the past, seem to deny that there has been any change at all.

The chain of events here sketched points unavoidably to the conclusion that our policy this last ten years has progressively weakened our defensive capacity. Again and again we have retreated from positions which before the War we should have regarded as, beyond any question whatever, indispensable to the Empire's security; again and again we have yielded to the threat of force what we had previously refused to peaceful negotiation. It is here suggested that though some degree of 'strategic retreat' may have been at times advisable, the policy if continued much further must render the defence of the commonwealth, those political and social values for which it has stood, a practical impossibility, whatever degree of armament Britain may decide to maintain.

It is true, of course, that strategic retreat may improve a nation's, like an army's, defensive position provided always that it is regarded as retreat and is consciously undertaken as such. But the disturbing feature about the retreats here sketched is that with

WHAT THIS BOOK IS ABOUT

important sections of British opinion they have been regarded not as steps taken to ensure an ultimate firmer stand, but as the definite abandonment of things which have ceased to be worth defending; surrenders which have taken place because we are in two minds as to whether the defeat of the enemy would be really a good thing or not. It is this feature in our retreat which is as important as the retreat itself. It has been led by those political groups who heretofore have taken an especial pride in the defence of the Empire, those whom one might term the Old Guard of Imperialism. As each surrender has taken place there has been positive rejoicing on the part of this 'old guard', publicly expressed satisfaction. A new John Bull has come into being. Surrenders which before the War would have been described by the British Imperialist as acts of supine treachery are now applauded and welcomed. The naval, military or strategic difficulties may explain the retreat, but hardly the jubilation.¹

This fact is also important because on such a 'mood' in public opinion depends largely the way it reads facts, the conclusions it draws from them. And in politics opinions about the facts are more important than the facts themselves, since it is upon our opinions that we act. In one state of mind or feeling, a nation will draw from a given event conclusions as to policy

¹ A Balkan statesman whose knowledge of English is colloquial remarked to me on one occasion: 'That you should retire gracefully whenever your bottom is kicked is perhaps explainable. But why these Press rejoicings every time the operation is repeated?'

the exact contrary of those they will draw in another state of mind.

Thus we find to-day general recognition of the fact that the Versailles Treaty is impracticable and perhaps unjust. If we had to make a settlement with Germany to-day we should not dream of making the Peace we made in 1919. Yet the relevant facts which condemn the settlement were just as available, as ascertainable, in 1919 as they are now. Not the availability of facts but the mood has altered.

When in 1919 some of us suggested that the Treaty of Versailles *would* prove an unwise and unworkable document inimical to Britain's best interest, our warnings were drowned in one great universal shout: 'What kind of peace would the Germans have made if they had been victorious?' The reply to which, of course, is that they would have made pretty much the kind of peace settlement we were then proposing to make; which was one good reason why we should not make it, in view of the fact that for years we had been declaring German political ideas and methods to be the enemy of civilisation. We were in a mood in which the badness of a given line of conduct or policy was our reason for imitating it.

So with Reparations. It was of little avail to show that a policy which would bring about the collapse of the monetary system of Central Europe would be disastrous to the economic welfare of Great Britain, because the great mass of the British people were not at that moment much interested in the welfare of

Great Britain. They were much more interested in indulging a hungry emotion of retaliation, the desire to hit back at Germany. Because the anti-German passion was inflamed to fever heat (by the self-same newspapers which to-day sing the praises of Nazi Germany as our natural ally) our people were indifferent to any incidental or relatively remote damage the hitting back might do to themselves. At Lord Rothermere's suggestion they took their 'hats off to France' for invading the Ruhr, indifferent to the subsequent cost of such a 'day out'.

Something of the same order of motives – with the difference that an entirely new and different villain has been discovered – undoubtedly enters into the causes explaining the strange situation outlined in the pages which follow. The most ardent patriot, who would be totally incapable of any conscious betrayal of the interests of his country, is quite capable of unconscious betrayal of the most disastrous kind in the ardent desire to hit at some scapegoat for whom fanatical dislike has been conceived.

The fact is often indeed proclaimed as inevitable. 'Men are not guided by logic, by reason,' the implication usually being that, in discussing national policy, it is futile to talk reason. But, precisely because men are so seldom guided by reason, it is important to talk reason where one may. And logic has its use even in emotional storms. The sight of the man who has vilely betrayed me does indeed provoke an emotion, a passion of murder, that no 'logic' can subdue. But

the 'logic' which the next moment enables me to see that, because this man has five fingers on his right hand and my enemy had one missing, he cannot be my enemy but someone else, has, after all, some influence on my conduct. I decide not to kill the wrong man.

If the brick wall into which the car is rushing really has been unperceived by the reckless driver, it is just as well to point it out, though recklessness may be a universal human failing. Perception of fact may not change human nature, but it can certainly change human conduct.

A preliminary, and fundamental, question arises: How far is indifference to imperial defence a matter for congratulation? Does it not mark the beginning of the end of that imperialism, nationalism and chauvinism which in the recent past have cursed the West and threatened to destroy it? Does not the new mood mean the opening of an era of greater sanity in international politics?

It is a supremely important question. Let us examine it.

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS THE EMPIRE?

Does its defence mean defence of the right to exploit subject peoples or provinces? If so our youngsters will not die on its behalf. The retention of old words, though the conditions they describe have long since passed, tends badly to distort our thought. The process of 'de-imperialisation'. What is its economic interpretation? Shall we redistribute imperialism, or end it? A note on the influence of monarchy in this process of 'de-imperialisation'.

THE question just indicated, whether that is an indifference to 'imperial security', is not a matter for rejoicing, is naturally the very first question which this present writer, who has opposed imperialism all his life, put to himself in connection with the change of attitude we are discussing. When we see the Germanophobes of yesterday, those who but a few years since were criticising the Versailles Treaty as too lenient to Germany and were applauding France for the invasion of the Ruhr, to-day urging an alliance with Germany; when we find the fiercest British nationalists and imperialists (e.g. the British Union of Fascists) urging the return of colonies to Germany, are we not witnessing the disappearance of

one great cause of rivalry and competition? Are we not by that fact nearer to international understanding and good order and peace?

Before we can answer 'yes' to that particular question certain others must be asked, and certain facts noted.

When we find Imperialists rejoicing at the success of a Hitler or a Mussolini or a Franco, even though the success may create dangers for the Empire, we are compelled to weigh the relative value of the things for which the Commonwealth has stood and those for which dictatorship stands. What kind of world would result from the disintegration, or the weakening of the Empire?

That depends on what the Empire really is; what it is we are defending or abandoning. We must know what we are talking about.

The strange political fabric we call the British Empire long since ceased to be simply an empire. An empire is a form of political organisation in which subject provinces or states are governed from an imperial centre, an imperium. But we know that that does not describe the British 'Empire'. By far the larger part, and the most important part, is not governed from London at all. Canada is not governed in or from London, nor is Australia, nor New Zealand, nor South Africa, nor, in very important matters like tariffs, is India, nor the Irish Free State. The Dominions have become in fact independent states and the Empire, so far as they are concerned, a very loose

alliance of those states, an association of independent democracies. The tendencies or forces which have produced this result and have abolished imperialism over so large a part of the earth's surface, which have enabled an Empire to transform itself into a Commonwealth—those forces have not suddenly stopped. They are still at work. India, which now possesses fiscal independence, the right to make her own tariff, is on the road to Dominion status. When India has become in fact a Dominion, she will not be the last Dominion. The process goes on.

Why did the British Empire cease to be an Empire properly speaking, and resolve itself, in large part, into a loose alliance of practically independent states? Why did the mother country surrender the economic privileges of an imperial position in according fiscal autonomy to its daughter states? No other empire in the past has done this. Spain did not, nor Portugal, nor Holland.

The evolution, alike on its political and economic sides, has exceedingly interesting and significant aspects. If we cut beneath words and symbols to the underlying reality we see that there has taken place, what we have been assured again and again by students of politics never could take place—changes of frontier, the creation that is of new frontiers, without war. Communities, originally part of an empire, have achieved separate political status in no way subordinate to that of the states of which originally they were part. That is to say, frontiers have been

changed. There are states, independencies and sovereignties where originally none existed; and this thing has been produced without war. The independence for which the Thirteen Colonies had to fight is accorded to Canada even without bitterness. Territory is freely 'given up'.

But why did we so readily acquiesce, so readily surrender our power, more especially power over the fiscal policies of the component territories of the Empire? For what we have seen going on is a process of economic 'de-imperialisation', the surrender of economic control in the territories we have conquered. What explains this 'de-imperialisation'?

It is astonishing how little the transformation, the surrender of empire, has been noticed. In the discussion of the colonial problem with Germany the protagonists of colony transfer repeatedly ask the question: 'Why, if colonies are of no particular value do you hesitate to give them up?' Nowhere have I noticed the reply that we are very steadily and consistently 'giving them up'. We are 'giving away the empire' to the only people to whom colonies ought to be 'given away' – to the people who live in them. But the constant talk of 'redistribution of colonies' or their transfer implies that we still assume that empire is 'property', that a nation owns a colony as a man owns a farm.¹ Note to what degree.

¹ Recently in the United States, in the course of lectures delivered to American Universities, the extent of ignorance as to what was taking place in the Empire (not perhaps much greater than that sometimes displayed in England itself) was brought home very vividly to this present

WHAT IS THE EMPIRE?

In the Senate discussions of the Debt problem Senator Hadfield suggested (and the suggestion was supported by an important metropolitan newspaper in America) that Britain might settle her debt by transferring Canada to the United States, that this transfer of 'property' would be accepted as full payment. Yet the Statute of Westminster had already been written several years and the facts of which it is merely a recognition been evident for forty or fifty.

Mr. Frederic Bausman, a Federal Judge of the Supreme Court of Washington in his book *Facing Europe* writes:

'So extensive is the British Empire's possession of raw materials that it is hardly likely she will long remain poor; and for that matter it is not in a military

writer. A questioner would seek to explain or justify the conduct of Italy by the density of the Italian population. I would point out that the density of population in England and Wales was just about twice what it is in Italy. The retort would come immediately: 'Oh, but you have the whole of the Empire to go to.' Did the questioner then think that it was open to Britain to send her unemployed as she wished into Canada and Australia? Why, yes, of course. Did the questioner then think that the immigration laws of Canada or Australia were made by the British Parliament and Government? Equally, of course. I might even get a disquisition on the British Constitution: All Bills, in every British Parliament, had to have the royal assent, and the King would certainly withhold assent if the Bill were inimical to British interest. Usually the questioners - educated, many engaged in the study of political science - had never heard of the Statute of Westminster. If its purport were explained they were quite sure there was a catch in it somewhere. And if, to cut argument short, I declared that Britain had no more power to vary the immigration restrictions of Australia or Canada than she had to vary those of the United States, I was met with quite open disbelief based on the line of argument, 'It could not be true because if it were true it would be absurd.'

sense that Britain is poor to-day, since she still can wield that mightiest of weapons, the dominating navy of the world. . . .

'From India, from Australia, from South Africa, and from Canada, her sons returned laden with the profits of newly-developed regions. Proprietorship of those regions was thus bringing back its gains. . . .

'After a bloody war in which Germany has barely escaped the jaws of Russia, Great Britain emerges in practical control of Persia, and in absolute control of rich Mesopotamia, once the granary of the world, easily made again its granary, and fabulously rich in oil. . . .

'The tentacles of England extend everywhere, from Halifax to Jamaica, from London to Capetown, from Gibraltar to Siam; and those tentacles have a sensitive power of suction.'

One of the publications (date 1935) of the American Foreign Policy Association which exists to put the facts of the international situation before the American public, explaining a chart showing the difference in possessions between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', says:

'The war to end war failed to solve the economic problems that had been its root cause. For back of national jealousies and desire for power is always the pressure for more territory, greater resources, increasing world markets. The chart shows the population of the leading nations, and how much wheat, potatoes, coal, steel, oil and cotton they produced in 1933. . . .

'The chart shows why England has built up a great empire of colonies from whom she can import the

WHAT IS THE EMPIRE?

things she lacks and to whom she can send surplus population and production.¹ . . .

Thus easily do these old conceptions cause serious writers to slip into sheer mis-statement of fact. The statement that Britain can send her surplus goods and population to the Empire implies of course that Britain has the power to dictate to the component states of the Empire whether or not their tariffs shall exclude British goods and their immigration laws British people. It would be truer to say that Britain has no more power to impose, to dictate the tariffs or immigration laws of the Dominions than she has those of the United States. She may bargain with the Dominions as she may bargain with Argentina or Denmark but the last word does not rest with her – as those who live by certain British industries interested in Dominion markets have very good cause to know. The statement about population is particularly significant. There is no part of the Empire suitable for white colonists where British citizens can now go as of right; no area from which British subjects at times when emigration is most necessary – in times of depression that is – are not excluded as rigidly as they are excluded from any foreign country.

¹ The statement goes on: Germany is densely populated, produces little wheat, many potatoes, some coal, a little steel, practically no oil and no cotton. She now has no colonies. It is easy to see why she is accused of looking with envious eyes at the Russian Ukraine, rich in agriculture and mineral deposits. There the famous black soil belt yields large crops of wheat, sugar beets and oil seeds. There in the Donetz Basin are vast deposits of coal, iron and other metals. There, too, are large chemical and dye industries, salt mines and newly-developed electric power plants.

This same notion of Britain as the 'possessor' of an estate was often the theme of so distinguished a writer as the late Frank D. Simonds. In a map which he publishes in one of his works, *Price of Peace*, which was also published in *The Strategy of Raw Materials*, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, are all marked as British 'possessions', the raw materials of which 'belong' to Britain. In one of Simonds's articles occurs the passage:

'With growing populations hammering at narrow frontiers the "have-nots" look forward to the day when their field-m Marshals and admirals will lead them to victories that will win the territories they covet. . . . Ultimately the "haves" must give the "have-nots" the land they need, or in the end they must fight to prevent them from taking it.'

A double illusion is, of course, involved in the foregoing: (a) The illusion that any nation needs to 'possess', to have within its political borders in peacetime the raw materials of its industry (as though Britain had not built her greatest export trade, the cotton trade of Lancashire, upon a foreign raw material, and as though she had to 'conquer' Louisiana or Georgia in order to render its products available for British use), and (b) the illusion concerning the nature of the British 'Empire'.

In perpetuating this latter illusion the use of the old names and symbols do undoubtedly play a part. If the South African Union called itself 'the South African Republic' or 'the United States of South

Africa', its resources would never have been marked on any map as 'belonging' to Britain. These misconceptions are momentarily important in the international field. The demand that the 'haves' surrender something of their 'possessions' to the 'have-nots' would lose a good deal of its force if it were fully realised that the 'haves' do not for the most part possess what they 'have' and consequently cannot well give it up.

It was fashionable for a few years after the War for foreign writers of 'Left' tendencies to prophesy war between Britain and America as the inevitable outcome of the scramble for trade which, it was assumed, goes automatically with imperial power.

Mr. Ludwell Denny, in his book, *America Conquers Britain*, under the chapter headed: 'Two Empires', writes thus:

'A state of economic war exists between America and Britain now. The question is whether this economic war, and its resultant political conflict, will lead to armed war. Capitalists and officials, and the public opinion which controls or fails to control policies, can prevent a war of guns. They cannot stop the economic war. They can only mitigate its dangers.

'For this economic war is not caused by popular misunderstandings, nor by capitalist machinations, nor by imperialistic governmental policies. They intensify but do not create the conflict. Rather are they created by it. The conflict is the natural and inevitable result of economic conditions obtaining in two countries and in the world.'

Right and Left are in agreement in the interpretation of the nature of British imperialism. The views just quoted are accepted all but universally by Marxian and Socialist writers. Trotsky, among others, supports completely Judge Bausman's view, and asserts repeatedly in his post-War writings that war between Britain and America as the result of commercial rivalry is absolutely inevitable.

While we have had from writers of 'Left' tendencies, both Marxist and anti-Marxist, a vast literature embodying the economic interpretation of imperialism, no one seems to have dealt with the economic interpretation of the abandonment of imperialism which has been by far the more considerable process. Why does not some 'economic determinist' present us with an economic interpretation of the abandonment of Empire, of 'de-imperialisation'?

Much attention has been directed to exposing the capitalist roots of imperialism. Very little attempt seems to have been made to explain, in terms of economic motive, the capitalist retirement from imperialism, the process by which vast territories like Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the Cape, the Philippine Islands have passed out of the control of the imperial powers which originally conquered them, have ceased to be in matters economic imperial territory, and have become economically independent states. Arrangements like those made at Ottawa are not in the nature of privileges imposed upon reluctant

subject-provinces by an imperial centre in London for the benefit of the mother country, in the manner of the sixteenth-century Spanish Empire, but are bargains made between equally sovereign nations, in which the Dominion of Great Britain does not necessarily come off best.

The economic importance of the area which, during the last sixty or seventy years, has become de-imperialised, 'unconquered', is infinitely greater than that of the area of fresh conquests. Yet while the economically less important has been the subject of a vast amount of attention of the kind described, the more important had been all but completely ignored. It would be possible to mention a score of American books in which it is taken for granted that the annexation of the Philippines was due to the pressure of capitalist interest. Not one of those authors explains how this thesis of capitalist pressure compelling an imperialist policy is to be reconciled with the quiet granting at a later date of complete independence to the Islands. Similarly, many writers have explained the Boer War as dictated by London financiers; they have failed to explain why, if the financiers desired and were able to dictate the Boer War and the conquest of Boer territory, they did not desire or were unable to prevent, the granting of a degree of independence to Boer territory which rendered impossible further dictation from London. The granting of tariff-making rights to the Indian Legislature raises similar questions concerning the real

relationship of capitalist interests to conquest and its maintenance.

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How far these misconceptions may lead us in the direction of wrong remedies is illustrated by the fact that even peace-minded progressives are urging 'redistribution' of territory as a solution of the problems raised by competing imperialisms. This means further attempts to make economic nationalism, imperial self-sufficiency workable. Instead of urging that no one ought to 'own' colonies, that the idea of colonial exploitation for the benefit of the 'owning' country is essentially evil and should be surrendered, they urge that the ownership and exploitation ought to be more equally divided. Instead of urging that all colonies ought to be open to the world on grounds of real equality, they urge that Germany is entitled to 'own' them and exploit them, as well as ourselves. Instead of standing for the abolition of imperialism they seem to stand for its splitting up into half a dozen or a dozen rival imperialisms.

On grounds of realism as well as ethics it is a bad policy. There is little chance of the 'transfer' solution ever being even tried, though certain dictatorship governments may believe the contrary. But the other solution of the open door is so little impossible that it was for a very long time the policy actually pursued by Great Britain.

To that policy we should return and in effect say to

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

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WHAT IS THE EMPIRE?

Germany: We are not prepared to have you 'own' colonies because we are ceasing to 'own' them ourselves. We *are* prepared to give you real equality of access. If your claim is that so far equality has not been real we are prepared to give you every opportunity of presenting your case, and if proved, making the necessary changes. We are prepared ourselves to accept the conditions which we offer to you.

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Writing in a coronation year it is worth while perhaps to add a note as to the part which the institution of monarchy has played in the transformation of empire into commonwealth.

The Crown does seem to have served a real purpose in providing the nations of the Commonwealth – the democracies of Canada, Australia, New Zealand – with a symbol, a pledge, which has enabled them to do what it has been so extremely difficult for states to do in the past: to combine all but complete independence of political units with a capacity for common action between those units when it is really vital. The British Commonwealth, made up of states too obstinately independent to accept any written and rigid Federal Constitution, have nevertheless managed to federalise the function which it is most essential of all to federalise, that of defence. With no written constitution at all, by means of just a 'gentlemen's understanding' the world knows, for instance, that if Japan should invade Australia, the Commonwealth as a

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

whole would stand for the defence of that particular member. The British Navy is an instrument of Australian defence, although Australia pays not one penny piece to its upkeep. Australian resources, human and material, would be available for the defence of Britain and the Commonwealth as a whole although there is no article of any constitution which imposes the obligation.

In the development of such a relationship the monarchy has certainly played a part. But note in what way.

We have had within the Empire for two hundred years or more the same conflict which marks the development of society everywhere: the conflict between liberty and authority, between those who want freedom, independence, self-government and those who hold the reins of power, who sit in the seats of the mighty. In inducing the latter to surrender their privileges, in inducing Britain to agree to surrender bit by bit all her rights over the colonies, the monarchy has proved extremely useful in this sense: the fact that the Colony, or Dominion, was ready to accept the King as symbol of the common authority has induced the British Tory to make concessions which he would certainly never have made if that gesture of loyalty had been refused.

The preservation of the monarchy, like the preservation of other feudal forms and symbols, has provided a means of 'face-saving' for those who, possessing privilege, are asked to surrender it. By allowing the

WHAT IS THE EMPIRE?

incumbents of privilege to retain the symbol, the shadow if you will, it has been immensely more easy to induce them peacefully to surrender the substance than it would have been otherwise. It sounds a little ridiculous to say that men will more readily surrender the reality of privilege than the name, the title, the station, but it is only ridiculous to those who have never really examined the nature of human motive. Men ornamented themselves from vanity, long ages before they clothed themselves for comfort, if indeed comfort can be said to be the first consideration in most clothing, even to-day. Men will make sacrifices for the sake of 'face', 'honour', 'respectability', that they would never make for purely material considerations. It is not psychologically possible for a man really to give his life for an economic motive—unless he is more certain of those heavenly mansions than, in fact, most men are. But men in all ages and all countries have readily given their lives from other motives. A man will not commit suicide for profit (how can he?), but he will commit suicide to escape disgrace, dishonour, deprivation of respect, social ostracism. 'It is vanity which makes the world go round.' Rather should we say that it is the desire for the respect, the deference, of others. When the motive becomes fierce and savage, it develops into a desire to humiliate others, to assert our superiority. Those who cannot see this and admit it as an almost universal factor of conduct that has to be taken into account, have not begun to understand the nature of the forces which

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

explain human society. It is not a minor and secondary factor of the human conduct, but lies at the very foundation of things. Any contest, as Galsworthy shows in *The Skin Game*, will tend to degenerate into a desire on the part of each side to secure the humiliation, the admission of defeat of the other, unless there enters a certain tradition, a feeling on the part of each that he must do what he can consonant with the substance of his own claim, to save the face of the other.

This face-saving for the other side the British democracy has always been ready to accord the privileged classes by allowing them to keep the form and symbol of privilege – so long as the substance is, in fact, surrendered. Thus, in the steady pruning of royal and feudal power, the popular forces in Britain have had the sense, the courtesy, to refrain, usually, from exacting, by surrender of symbols, formal admission of defeat by monarch or aristocracy. The monarch in Britain, like the aristocracy, has retained unchanged the names, the phrases, the symbols, which belong to a completely feudal order of society. It is because this concession has been made, that peaceful settlement between the rival factions has come about. In effect, the popular forces have said to King and Nobles, 'Keep your titles, keep your forms of privilege, so long as the reality of our rights is granted. You shall retain,' in effect, the commoners have said to the King (in some cases to the feudal order), 'the right to pronounce decisions, but you shall

WHAT IS THE EMPIRE?

pronounce decisions only on the "advice" of your ministers, who shall be our nominees.' This has made possible a rapid concession on the part of privilege, which would certainly not have been possible if the people, the popular mass that is, had in effect said to privilege: 'You shall abdicate, not merely in fact, but in form. Not even the shadows shall be left you.' This has so often been the habit in France, this tendency to regard the doctrine, or rather the symmetrical, neat and tidy formulation of the doctrine, as the all-important thing.

We have seen this same form of concession to face-saving, made in the evolution of the Empire into a commonwealth of independent states. Had the dominions, who are in fact to-day Republics, started with a demand for the right of formal, symbolical republicanism, those claims would have been fought by the conservative elements in Britain to the death. But so long as the monarchy seemed to retain its place, so long as Britain did not have to make as it were the sign of surrender, almost any concession could be made. In any case the fact is, that claims to independence on the part of colonies which, in the eighteenth century, meant bitter war between the colonies and the mother-country, were granted to Canada and Australia in the nineteenth century without any war at all, without bitterness, and in a form which has enabled the British Commonwealth to solve (so far) the age-old conflict between freedom and authority, to make a reconciliation between the two

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

which does not seem to have been made so effectively ever before. The forces of the Left at home have shown a similar wisdom in their own particular conflicts with Torydom.

Just after the War, when all parties were more or less busy drawing up constitutions for the new order, a certain small political party in Britain had put at the head of its proposals: 'Republican form of government.' One English veteran of the Labour movement spoke thus:

'Put the word "Republic" at the head of your programme, and you will spend the next two generations fighting wastefully, hatefully, spilling blood, over shadows and symbols, and we shall never get to questions of social welfare at all. You will spend your lives tilting at windmills. And possibly in the end the windmills will defeat you. Make the concession of form on your side and you can get, with infinitely greater ease, the concession of the substance from the other.'

What, he went on to ask, did they want? Slum abolition, control of industry, old-age pensions, minimum wage, work or maintenance – did these things come first or last? If they wanted them to come first, 'concede the King'.

But while the retention of old symbols of sovereignty, archaic terms of feudalism, have been enormously useful in making the surrender of ancient privilege easier, of taking the edge off that surrender of easing the transition from imperialism to inter-

WHAT IS THE EMPIRE?

nationalism within the confines of the British Commonwealth, the continued employment of those terms has made it difficult for foreigners – if not indeed for Englishmen themselves – to appreciate just what is taking place, or what has taken place, in the 'Empire', to see realities beneath the names and the symbols. And it is important to see the realities.

CHAPTER III

WHAT THEN DO WE DEFEND?

Though we do not 'own' our empire we have an interest in the preservation of order in the area it covers, in preventing that area being closed against us in an economic sense by passing into other hands, and in preventing the use of its resources as power against us. Colonies of doubtful value in peace, may be a source of material, human and inanimate, in war-time. The co-operation of independent communities which the commonwealth facilitates aids in the defence of scattered democracies as against the mass power of dictatorships which can impose unity. The dangers of unworkable alternatives to imperialism. The solution is neither a disintegrating nationalism nor a multiplication of imperialisms by redistribution.

WHAT is it then that we defend? If, as is undoubtedly the case, we have already in an economic sense de-imperialised most of the Empire so that the part over which Britain is able to impose her will in an economic sense represents barely ten per cent of her overseas trade (and much of which would still exist if that part like the rest were de-imperialised), why the feverish rearming, armaments programmes that outdo anything history has known?

WHAT THEN DO WE DEFEND?

Why this terror that there may be taken from us something which we do not, in economic fact, possess?

Our conduct in insisting upon adequate defence is not so irrational as the form of the question might suggest.

There are two motives, perfectly rational as far as they go, one economic, one political, which explains our defensive activity.

The history of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Empires (particularly the Spanish) shows pretty clearly that it is of dubious advantage to a country to incur the costs and frictions inherent in the imperialist rule of powerful distant communities. But a highly industrialised country may well be, as Britain is, vitally dependent upon an international or world-wide process which disorder and political anarchy can utterly disrupt. The cost to Lancashire and other industrial areas in Britain of the anarchy which has smitten China since the War, has been immense, incalculable. And if formal withdrawal from, say, India were to involve on that sub-continent the kind of chaos which China these last years has revealed (and India is far less homogeneous in its make up than China, and might well prove to be more subject to internal clashes and strains) there would be no question of the cost to Britain.

In other words Britain *has* a very vital interest in the maintenance of order in territories which furnish her a market.

If the Suez Canal were suddenly blocked or trade

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

with India or Australia made impossible by other means, then, as one result, within a week or two certain children in certain streets of Manchester and Liverpool would begin to die. Britain is entitled, if she can, to prevent the deaths of those children, or the impoverishment of those streets. That is indeed 'legitimate defence'.

Furthermore, doubtful as may be the advantages to the mother country of the 'closed empire' of the old type, the disadvantages to other countries are unquestionable. If India—or for that matter and more pertinently China—were to fall under the dominion of Powers who would close the territory to our trade, the damage would be quite clear. We feel that we need to defend ourselves against the economic errors of others; and to defend order.

But it is the defence of a process, not of 'property'. It is for Britain vitally necessary that the traffic on certain roads should not be impeded. So long as the traffic code is observed she need not 'own' the roads, and users of roads commonly do not own them. But if for some individual to own a road is the only means by which he can be sure of the secure use of it, then he has an interest in ownership.

Yet it is very largely confusion on that point which creates the dangers and tensions of our world. For if one user wants to own or dominate the road then other users will challenge his right so to do, and a problem which is really one of order becomes one of ownership. We have become so obsessed with the

WHAT THEN DO WE DEFEND?

'possessive illusion' that we would rather own separate bits of the road than subscribe to rules governing the use of the whole. We realise quite imperfectly what it is we need, and need to defend. We do not need 'ownership' we do need order. The present writer has summarised the case elsewhere, thus:

Defence, the security of the nation, its people, wealth, trade, prosperity, cultural rights, civilisation, demands mainly, not the defence of materials or soil from predatory seizure by others – all nations in the modern world are actually far more concerned to exclude than to seize the goods of others – but the organisation of processes analogous to the maintenance of unimpeded traffic on the highways. While Big Navy organisations are demanding more cruisers to 'protect our trade routes', much of that trade disappears in a few years, and our ships lie idle in port successfully blockaded by economic collapse. What is the Navy doing? Vital trades in great industrial cities like Bradford are ruined by the tariffs of our own Dominions. How does the Navy protect it? An Admiral once said that, but for our Navy, foreigners would 'loot the cellars of the Bank of England'. We were pushed off the gold standard through a raid by foreigners upon our gold reserves. How could the Navy prevent it? If in fact the livelihood – the life – of our nation is dependent upon the maintenance of a flow or process, analogous to traffic regulation on a highway, then defence of that life can only be secured by co-operation with others. To attempt to ensure safety and smooth travel by the method of each having a bigger car than any he is likely to collide with, and to drive as he sees fit with no regard to general rule, must by its nature fail. It can only produce chaos and

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

disaster, as indeed it has in the international field. You cannot possibly ensure anybody's defence by the isolated action of each user of the road.

Defence, safety, must be organised by the community, or there can be none at all.

But if the necessary rules of the road cannot be secured by co-operative or collective action we are thrown back upon seeing that the roads are kept open by any means possible in the present disorganised state of the world.

§

Which brings us to a further and more vital consideration. In war-time territory within our political control may become a source of indispensable power. Its possession is therefore part of that struggle for power which must take place where each is compelled to be his own defender, where there is no society of nations organising the common defence of its members.

Where self-preservation of the individual depends upon his isolated strength, each will struggle for sources of strength as the one condition of safety. That consideration will come before interest, welfare. 'Defence is more than opulence,' as we put it. 'Guns are more important than butter,' as Goering put it to a butterless people; who readily agree.

Arguments which are entirely valid if our object is prosperity and welfare in peace-time lose their weight if our real object is power for war. There is, in fact, complete accessibility to raw materials

WHAT THEN DO WE DEFEND?

(subject to being able to pay for them) in peace-time. In war-time the doors may close. A nation then, struggling, as it feels for its life, may find itself shut off from foreign raw material. At such times it wants to have such material within its borders.¹

So long as nations put defence before peace, which they all do, and defence is not co-operatively organised, the instinctive desire for territory, not as a means of economic benefit, but as a source of political and military power, will remain. It is one demonstration the more of the truth that you cannot separate the problem of economic organisation from the problem of defence. The two are one.

And it is not merely a matter of 'raw' material but of human material. Perhaps a third of the total military force available for France is black. Britain herself derived great power from her Indian and colonial troops. (India alone contributed a million and a quarter men to the British forces during the Great War.) To make some millions of Abyssinian warriors subject to conscription by the Italian state is an ambition that the master of Italy has never troubled to disguise. It should be noted that native levies from Eritrea and Somaliland played a large part in the campaign against Abyssinia. It will hardly have been lost upon Mussolini that, as

¹ But you get this curiously circular argument:

Why do you need to go to war?

To have raw materials within our borders.

Why do you need to have them within your borders?

In order that we may go to war.

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

Seeley pointed out, India was conquered with a manpower supplied by India itself. Why should not history repeat itself in Africa?

For India to drift under the domination of some rival power would mean a good deal more than that the tariff against our goods would be much more severe than that which the Indian legislature now imposes. It might mean in addition that a source of power would be taken from our side and put on to some rival side 'counting two on a division' so that our whole defensive position would be enormously weakened.

Parenthetically it may be noted that the armed and trained African, once the possibilities of his power has dawned upon him, is unlikely to confine his military attentions to his fellow African. When Italy announced her intention of conquering Abyssinia, several South Africans pointed out the vast dangers which are likely to confront the European in Africa if the conquest of Abyssinia strengthens the tendency to use African soldiers in war between Europeans; if, to put it crudely, we train Africans to kill Europeans expertly and scientifically. The High Commissioner of the South African Union in London particularly spoke of the sinister possibilities of the training of the teeming black races of Africa for war, possibilities not less sinister in view of the reported presence of African troops in the army which Italy has sent into Spain to join with other Africans from Morocco in destroying a European government.

WHAT THEN DO WE DEFEND?

So long therefore as the European anarchy continues two profound motives, if not for the control of territory by ourselves, at least for not seeing it pass under the control of others, will continue to operate: the fear that we shall be shut out from territory to which at present we have access; and the fear that our relative position in a world of competitive power may be weakened.

§

But are there motives beyond this? Do we not defend something more than the possession of means of defence and freedom from economic restriction?

Are there values beyond things economic, which we believe to be worth defending even at the cost of war and all that war under modern conditions must mean?

Now every nation in the world has answered that question in the affirmative. That is to say every nation, small as well as great, arms itself, creates sometimes at great cost (as in the case of certain of the smaller states like Switzerland), the instruments of war. That means at least two things. First a rejection of the Pacifist position. All nations, without any exception whatever, put defence before peace. If their view were that nothing could be as bad as war they would submit to invasion, to alien rule, rather than provoke a condition of war by resistance. The armaments would not exist. Their very existence announces that their possessors regard certain conditions

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

as worse than war. In order to achieve some means of defence every nation in fact is prepared to make enormous economic sacrifices ('guns are more important than butter').

What are these non-economic goods? Perhaps we do not quite know. Before the Great War we spoke of democracy, fighting to make the world safe for it; the rights of nationality, small nations, self determination.

But the War which was fought to make the world safe for democracy has been followed by a veritable epidemic of dictatorships; by a more definite repudiation of the whole principle and theory of democracy than at any period since Athens. But something stranger still has happened. Some of the very men who fought and risked their lives for 'democracy and freedom' to-day proclaim both to be unworthy things; what yesterday they were fighting for to-day they detest—and teach the new generation to detest. One of the strangest spectacles of history is to see young men parading the streets clamantly demanding that the right to dispose of their own lives shall be taken from them; demanding that they shall not have the right even to know the purpose or end for which the Chief, the Duce, the Führer, the Leader is to send them to die. They are told for instance to destroy Communism as the enemy of their Fatherland. But they are not permitted to know what Communism is, to read its literature, to study its purposes. They must not judge

WHAT THEN DO WE DEFEND?

for themselves; the Leader must judge for them. And the demand that this right to know, to decide for themselves, be taken from them is a demand usually made with passion and fanaticism.

During the War and before we were told that we were engaged in destroying certain evil doctrines – ‘militarism’, ‘might makes right’, the worship of force, doctrines embodied in the pre-War Germany of the Kaiser. Those doctrines, after the War, take a much cruder, more sinister form both in Germany and Italy – and immediately the same newspapers which had been violently hostile not only to the Kaiser’s Germany but to the disarmed and relatively pacifist Weimar Republic became ardent partisans of the Hitlerite Germany which makes Pacifism an offence and has returned to the worship of force with a conscious Paganism that would have profoundly shocked the Kaiser. The newspapers which demanded war to destroy the autocracy of the Kaiser, now urge us to imitate the autocracy of Hitler, to adopt for ourselves the kind of policy we fought the War to destroy.

Yet, giving full weight to all those considerations, we know this: That we, like every other nation in the world would fight for the right to govern ourselves according to our way of life and feeling. And in the circumstances of the British Commonwealth that means that the defence of the Empire involves the defence of the right of democratic communities to retain their own form of government. To defend

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

'the Empire' makes us, even though against our will, the defenders of democracy, of the right of such democratic communities to organise co-operatively their defence.

If the power of the Empire then has ultimate human utility it is for this reason: In its modern form it embodies the right of popular governments scattered throughout the world to combine in defence against governments that repudiate not merely democracy but liberalism, freedom of discussion, the right to know even the grounds upon which some alien government may ask them to die, or to slaughter. Clearly it would be out of the question for a community like New Zealand, busily engaged in all kinds of social and economic experimentation to defend itself single-handed against say Japan; or for the South African Union to defend itself against, say, Italy who might see in the Union an infinitely more desirable area of expansion and empire than Abyssinia is ever likely to be. If Germany had believed that Britain would adopt the same attitude in respect of the defence of the South African Union that she did in respect of the defence of Abyssinia, would the outcome of the dispute about Nazi activities in the ex-German Colonies have been quite what it was?

At present the rights and territorial integrity of the new nations of the Commonwealth are respected because their defence is organised on a collective basis; because the Empire represents, as already noted, a nascent international society. Despite the continual

WHAT THEN DO WE DEFEND?

insistence by the Dominions upon their right to stay out of any war upon which other Dominions – notably the Dominion of Great Britain – may engage, the obligations of mutual assistance, much less formal than those entered into at Geneva, are in political fact much more real. As noted a page or two back, we have managed to combine the independence of units with a very loose – too loose – federalisation for defence. We possess no common parliament, no common tariff, no common currency or monetary policy, no common navy or army, no common foreign office. We have federalised nothing but defence and that merely to this extent: If one of the Dominions were attacked – Australia say by Japan – the Empire as a whole would come to the aid of the threatened Dominion. The undertaking has not even been given statutory form. But without some such collective system these small democracies could have had small chance of defence, except so far as Canada and the West Indies could have taken shelter under the Monroe Doctrine. Imagine the situation if the British colonies and possessions in their struggles for autonomy had gone the way of the American colonies of Spain, and split into separate republics so that there had been an independent state of a million or two million at the antipodes; with Canada splitting into a French republic and an English-speaking one; South Africa into Dutch and English-speaking states often quarrelling with each other, sometimes fighting as the Spanish American republics have so often

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

fought. The prospects for the survival of democracy would be in even worse case than it is. If the lesser democratic states are to survive at all it will be by the capacity for union.

This capacity for union is extremely difficult to develop as between democracies. Not only is it true that unity is easier under dictatorship, but the dictatorships have at times come into being just because they seemed to be the only means of unity. And precisely because this democratic unity is so difficult to create we cannot afford lightly to sweep aside these integrations and co-operations which the forces or accidents of history have actually brought into being. We know that democracy is threatened by the greater power and unity of dictatorships. Any form of combination therefore which increases the defensive power of small nations of a million or two like New Zealand, or six millions like Australia, so as to make a better showing when confronted with Dictator-dominated masses of eighty millions or more, is assuredly an aid to the defence of democracy, threatened much more seriously in our day in Europe than it was in Abraham Lincoln's day in America. Lincoln believed that if the American Union went to pieces democracy would not survive or the Western Hemisphere. Already, almost everywhere south of the Mexican border, it had become a pretence, or a grotesque comedy. The tendency to disintegration in that vast area that had recently been under a single government was a strong one. If the Northern Union went the way of Spanish

WHAT THEN DO WE DEFEND?

America and broke up into small independent republics, democracy in the new world might well in fact become impossible. Lincoln was no militarist and no swashbuckler. But rather than split the Union he was prepared to plunge his nation into one of the bloodiest wars of history, a war which, superficially and theoretically denied to states the right of self-determination, the right to separatism, to a new nationalism. (For, of course, he fought, not primarily to abolish slavery, but to preserve the Union.) He took that dread decision because he felt that if American unity went, democracy went, and government by the people would indeed perish from the new world.

§

The need for union to-day among the remaining democracies of the older world manifests itself in a different way, but is fundamentally just as vital.

Not only is unity relatively easy under dictatorship and more difficult where opinions are free and where government is by discussion and contrary views must be reconciled by free consent, but geography favours unity in the case of Russia, Germany or Pan-Germany, Japan. If the potential power of the democracies is to be equal to that of the dictatorship states then the small units must somehow learn the trick of consolidation, rapid and effective co-operation.

If the preservation of the American Union was indispensable to the preservation of democracy eighty years ago, the preservation of the British

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

Commonwealth of democracies scattered over the face of the earth is certainly as indispensable to the defence of freedom in a world infected it would seem by an epidemic of dictatorship and the growing disintegration of democracies. In so far as the Empire is a means by which free states may learn to combine for common defence, it is a servant of freedom, and its retreat before the ever-growing power of Fascist Dictatorships constitutes a grievous weakening of that cause everywhere.

§

Much of the foregoing will be regarded by many progressive folk as a gloss upon imperialism, a repudiation of the rights of small nations now 'prisoners of British imperialism'.

The worst enemies of freedom are sometimes those who, speaking in its name, refuse to face the price that must be paid for it.

'Absolute' self-determination, or sovereignty, or independence, is incompatible with civilisation. To talk, as anti-imperialist critics sometimes do, as though a few thousand desert tribesmen or Hispano-Indian peasants, if only they will call themselves a 'nation', should have complete control of raw materials indispensable to the world as a whole, or the right to block some world highway, is to set up standards which in fact will not be observed, and the ethics of which perhaps do not deserve observance.

To say that Colombia, because in the welter and

WHAT THEN DO WE DEFEND?

chaos of the South American revolutions against the Spanish power the isthmus of Panama happened to fall within her territory, is therefore entitled to hold up the building of the Panama Canal, or a small Arabian tribe to endanger the Suez Canal, and that no great Power or Powers must trespass on the sanctity of their nationality, is to part company with the world of reality.

If we are to say that the outside world has no rights in China; the British none whatever in India (where they have been much longer than the Americans have been in California or Texas), where is one to stop? Must North America be evacuated in favour of the Red Indians? To talk in terms of nationalist absolutes lands us in phantasy.

It is true, of course, that when the great state does assert itself, as in the case of Panama or the Suez Canal, it is often by bullying and chicane. But it does not solve the problem, nor prevent similar bullying and chicane in the future, to suggest as the only alternative that Britain can sacrifice her trade, and the world's ships continue to go round the Horn or the Cape.

The true method is not to deny the right of the powerful state but to extend the right to others, to the weak; to see that the same protections and securities accorded to British and Americans are accorded also to Indians or Egyptians or Arabians or Colombians, and the same limitations impartially imposed. If the means by which certain definite millions obtain food

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

for their stomachs and clothes for their backs are not ensured by methods which will take into account the rights of the strong as well as those of the weak, the strong will settle the matter according to their own views.

In other words, the remedy for imperialism is not nationalism, which threatens to Balkanise the world, but internationalism, which, be it noted, is not the denial of nationalism but its orderly organisation, the limitation of its rights in the same way that in any civilised society the right of the individual must be made subject to the general interest in order that the individual can live at all.

A nationalist said the other day with reference to the 'imperialist oppressions', that 'an invader has no rights except to be expelled'. And he implied that there was no statute of limitations. The British in India were invaders and the numbers of years that have passed since the invasion had, he added, nothing to do with it. But they are not the only invaders in India, and if the other invaders, whose invasion goes back a little further, are also to be expelled, then the other Indians—North American—might ask the Whites to evacuate Manitoba, or Ontario, or Massachusetts, or for that matter New York. If one takes a fairly long sweep in historical retrospect, it is impossible to say who is the invader and who is the aborigine. There are many areas in which different 'nations' live in the same street, and have lived for centuries.

WHAT THEN DO WE DEFEND?

Absolute principles are reduced to absurdity in this connection by the facts of history. The migrations, the invasions, the overlappings date back to pre-history. It is a fact that the English in America have driven back or driven out the native by cruelties and ferocities that were sometimes unspeakable, just as the Scandinavians and the Germans drove back the native Briton: and the Norman, at a later date, imposed his rule upon the previous invader. It is plainly ridiculous to suppose that a sponge can be passed over centuries of history because an 'invader has no rights'.

Self-determination, as we were reading it during the War, and as some of us continue to read it, ignores historical fact as completely as would the demand of the Red Indian tribes still existing in North America that the invaders of New York and Chicago should kindly go back home. Conditions, good, bad or indifferent, have been created by past events, and it is those conditions with which we have to grapple. One of the conditions is that the welfare, the very existence of individuals on one side of the world are dependent upon what is done by certain individuals on the other side of the world. And as a matter of very elementary morals, of the most rudimentary social obligation, the one group must guide its conduct in some degree by the effect which its conduct may have upon the other.

This is all surely self-evident. Yet the problem of political nationalism, self-determination, imperialism, is too often discussed as though these plain facts were

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

non-existent, especially the plain fact of the world-wide interdependence of peoples, and consequent mutual obligations the one to the other.

Having recognised one fundamental fact we must also recognise others. Indians (or Irishmen or South Africans) are entitled to say to Englishmen: 'We admit that India has obligations to Britain and the outside world, as Britain has obligations to India. We do not admit the right of Britain to be sole judge as to what they are, or to impose her will upon India: any more than Britain would admit the right of India to be sole judge or to impose her will upon Britain if she could.'

What is the reply? It is that at present there is no systematically organised world society, no generally recognised world authority; and the relations of states are chaotic and anarchic to a degree which is not true at all of the relations between individuals living in a systematically organised state. Where there is no common authority, no organised society, a condition of contract almost inevitably becomes one of the 'status' – a condition in which the more powerful of the two parties has the casting vote. Otherwise, when honest differences arise, and each side is passionately convinced that it is right and the other wrong, you get either the triumph of the strong or sheer deadlock. And deadlock, the suspense of vital activities, will not long endure in a world that must somehow feed its people. When the traffic is blocked because a dispute is on as to whether cars should go to the left as in Britain or to the right as abroad, it matters less

WHAT THEN DO WE DEFEND?

whether it should be right or left than that it should be one or the other, and that the decision should be universally enforced.

Stated differently: there is so little of inter-state organisation in existence, and the need for it so great, that we cannot lightly sacrifice even such imperfect organisation as exists. For a world in dire need above all of integration, of the enlargement of the areas acknowledging some common authority, any principle like that of the unqualified self-determination or complete independence of a given group for no reason other than that it chooses to call itself a nation, is bound to make for disaster.

If there is one thing certain in modern politics it is this: That if we in the West cannot get beyond nationalism and self-determination, then all hope of making Europe a place where men may live in peace and labour fruitfully must be surrendered. Wherever a nationalist claim to independence has been granted – in Poland, in Rumania, in Yugoslavia, in Italy, wherever one may turn – the granting of the nationalist claim sets up as many problems as it solves. Self-determination cannot be satisfied, because pushed to its conclusion you would want half a dozen governments in the same street. Absolute independence ought not to be claimed by anyone. We must be partners. The price we pay for civilisation is the surrender of the right of each to be his own master.

It is assumed that the independence which has come to inhere in Dominion Status is an entirely good and

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

workable feature which needs no modification. But the independent states of the Empire (and they are independent states, admittedly) are now tentatively retracing their steps, trying to achieve some means of acting together, some machinery of imperial unity, or federalism. It takes in the economic field fantastic forms, with talk of a closed empire, imperial free trade, what not. But even the fantasies are testimony to the need for greater unity, more efficient means for common action. No one who can weigh events at all believes for a moment that the present looseness of the Commonwealth will be its final form, that it will crystallise in that form. It will either follow the disintegrating tendency of the time and dissolve completely, with not even the vague general understandings that now bind it, or it will strengthen the integrating tendencies (for the two tendencies exist and fight each other) by steady growth towards greater union.

It is sometimes argued: To the degree to which, say, an Irish Free State, or the South African Union or India, gets away from the Empire it gets towards Geneva, and one grouping is exchanged for another. But if the disruptive forces grow, and we get Europe split into an ever-increasing number of small states (like those of the eighteenth-century Germanies) the League will become an utterly unworkable organ. A League of two hundred or five hundred states (and India alone could supply the number if every native state should insist upon its 'complete independence

WHAT THEN DO WE DEFEND?

and sovereignty') would be either a hotbed of futile political gerrymandering, or become as unreal as the Holy Roman Empire at its worst.

To get anything done, anything decided, any rules established, any real government of the world at work through our very precarious experiment of the League, every unifying organ must be developed to its utmost. To discard one which has operated for nearly two hundred years, in order to give a 'moral satisfaction' to aspirations which, however human and excusable, are not in the last analysis moral because they are not socially workable, is surely to head for tragic failures under the flourish of high-sounding slogans.

Lincoln, the great democrat, fought for democracy by denying, in his forcible coercion of a people who resisted him, the very principle of government by consent which he proclaimed. It required something more than a flourish of slogans to arrive at the conviction that to compel a people by force to remain under a government which they hated and repudiated was a necessary course for the preservation of government 'of the people, for the people, by the people'. He appealed from the mere superficial inconsistency to the fundamental reality. He, too, fought for a unity, without which, he felt, free human government could not survive.

CHAPTER IV

THE POLITICAL CONDITIONS OF EFFECTIVE DEFENCE

Defence consists not merely in the possession of the material instruments, guns, but in the assurance that the guns will shoot in the right direction. This non-material element of defence is curiously neglected: The same public which will get hysterical over an alleged shortage of guns or planes or ships will be indifferent to a political change which may result in shifting over whole armies or navies from our side to a prospective enemy's, 'counting two on a division'. Further, no power however great can deter the prospective aggressor unless he believes that the power will be used against him, a fact which is the main unlearned lesson of the Great War. Commitments and the last war. We may well at times decrease our liabilities by increasing our obligations. Alliances are indispensable, but they must not be of the pre-War type. What kind they must be.

THE ultimate factor in effective national defence is political: Who, when the guns begin to go off is going to be with you and who against you? That is a political not a military question.

Until we can at least provisionally and hypothetically answer it we can never know whether our armament is adequate or not. A degree of armament that

CONDITIONS OF EFFECTIVE DEFENCE

would be effective in one political situation, when, say, the prospective enemy is a single state and we have powerful allies, would be quite inadequate in another situation in which we might have to meet a combination of powerful states single-handed.

It is this fact which condemns armed isolationism as an effective defensive policy. Suppose you assume provisionally that X. is the hypothetical enemy against whom we are arming. To be in a position to keep our end up we need a given degree of armament. We get it, establish parity.¹ X. then makes an alliance which doubles his power. Parity has disappeared. What do we do? Double our armaments? Perhaps. Then the hostile Dual Alliance becomes a triple

¹ Can we ever? During the discussion of naval parity with America the British at one juncture pointed out to the Americans that one proposed arrangement gave the latter more power in a certain category of ships. The Americans retorted: 'Yes, but look at your coaling stations!' How many coaling stations go to how many ships? Nobody has ever been able to say and nobody ever will be able to say.

It was during that discussion that a still more elusive problem in the equation of the varying factors of national power came up. We had built a new type of cruiser mounting an eight-inch gun, which the American experts were disposed to imitate, and the problem was to establish how the power of the cruiser mounting a six-inch gun compared with that mounting an eight-inch gun. The experts in Washington made an interesting discovery. In clear weather an eight-inch gun cruiser had undoubted superiority because it could outrange the other, but in foggy weather the six-inch gun had superiority because, operating at close quarters, it could manoeuvre more quickly. 'Well now,' said the Americans, 'look at your liability to fog. This gives your six-inch gun cruisers a power comparable to eight-inch cruisers on this side of the water where weather is apt to be clearer. We really must take that climatic factor into consideration in the allocation of power.'

How much fog goes to how many cruisers? It prompted a Senator in Washington at the time to say that among the factors we had to equate were 'fogs, bogs and hogs'.

A discussion along these lines could, of course, go on to the end of time.

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

alliance. What do we do then? We make an alliance, and that is the end of isolationism.

After all an alliance is a source of power like the air arm or the submarine. If the other side adopts it we too must do so or drop out of the race, accept a position of inferiority of power which makes defence physically impossible.

No phrase is commoner in this discussion than that 'nations will not fight except for their direct interests', the implication being that they will not fight on behalf of the defence of others, for a principle of international order. Then they can have no effective defence at all.

Imagine a case (it happens to exist) in which a great power, or combination of powers, possesses force expressed by the index figure 100, and that it is flanked by half a dozen less powerful states each of whose force is represented by the index figure 50. If each of these latter says: 'We will only fight if directly attacked, not for others,' then they will only fight to lose: the greater state or combination has them at its mercy. But from the moment, however, that they made a defensive confederation, a league, based on the principle 'an attack on one is an attack on all', the lesser states have a power represented, not by 50, but by 300.

It is literally true to say that only by being willing to defend others, can they possibly defend themselves.

In all this discussion there is usually a confusion between obligation and liability; a quite unwarranted

CONDITIONS OF EFFECTIVE DEFENCE

assumption that we increase our liabilities when we increase our obligations. We may well diminish the former by increasing the latter. An insurance company does not necessarily weaken its position by adding to its clients.

We had no obligation in respect of Serbia before the War, but we were soon to discover that we had liabilities. The liabilities would have been far less deadly if we had had clear and defined obligations which would have constituted a warning to the aggressor. That lesson, too, is probably unlearned.

But this truth bears decisively upon the question of the policy of retreat. If retreat means the steady elimination by the aggressor of our potential allies, necessary to our defence, then steadily and inexorably with every retreat our defensive position becomes progressively worse, and if continued beyond a certain point must make defence of the Empire impossible.

In other words, for the democratic states of Europe there can be no defence which is not collective defence. In the last War we had a baker's dozen of allies, and they were not too many. We welcomed even Portugal and Siam. Remembering how near a thing it was when we had Italy, Russia and Japan on our side and that on the next occasion two of those states may be against us, the importance of the political preparation of defence becomes evident.

§

The public discussion of the problem of defence is

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

marked by a curious phenomenon. Certain assumptions commonly made as self-evident truths are when examined seen to be complete fallacies, inconsistent alike with logic and with the concrete facts of experience and history.

The commonest perhaps, and the one which dominates national thought at the moment on the subject of defence, is that possession of great national power will of itself deter aggression.

We know by the proof of recent tragic events that that is not true.

In the last War we and our allies possessed not merely great power but power very much greater than we can perhaps ever hope to possess again. For we had on our side the power of Russia, Japan, Italy, the United States. We can be reasonably sure that not all of those will be on our side again, that some will be opposed to us. Yet we know that that power, which we can never exceed, or even duplicate, did not deter aggression.

The reason is childish in its simplicity: The potential aggressor did not know beforehand that these vast forces would be used against him. In the absence of this pre-knowledge, power, however great, obviously cannot deter. It serves no purpose to make punishment ferocious, if the potential criminal is unaware that the punishment exists, or if he has become convinced that it will not be applied.

Yet this first rudimentary simplicity is usually ignored or denied in discussion of the problem of

CONDITIONS OF EFFECTIVE DEFENCE

defence. 'If only,' said an American admiral a few years since to the writer, 'our Navy had been twice what it was in 1914, the Germans would never have dared to go to war.' I asked him to explain how and why, since in 1914 no German and no American could have foreseen that great American armies would cross the Atlantic to fight Germany, nor that the United States, which had fought one war against Britain over the question of sea rights (and been near to several more) would suddenly turn round and support the British view. If, at the beginning of the century, the United States had begun to build up great naval power, it is not Germany that would have been disturbed, but Great Britain, remembering always that the sea conflicts of the past have been as between Britain and the United States far more than as between America and Germany. About the year 1900 the German advocates of great naval power would have rejoiced to see Britain and America getting into a naval building race. Such competition between Britain and America would not have deterred any aggressive intention that Germany might have possessed.

In his memoirs Mr. Lloyd George asks the question: 'Could the Great War have been prevented?' And, he (like a dozen other witnesses of similar authority) replies that it would have been prevented if Germany had known beforehand that she would have to face the power which finally entered the field against her. In the absence of such pre-knowledge the power could not possibly have deterrent effect.

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

That truth, so rudimentary, is not only not recognised usually in this discussion, it is turned upside down. The most ardent advocates of a great armament programme are usually those who oppose 'commitment', that is to say, any clear statement of what we should regard as attack; what policy on the part of the potential enemy would set in motion our power against him. Daily does one find it argued in the Press that commitments increase the danger of war, will inevitably turn a local war into a world war.

Again we have the verdict of fact, of event, of unevadeable history.

In 1914 an extremely local war – a shot in a Balkan village – involved the whole world in conflict. Was this inexorable spreading of the local conflict into a world war due to the entanglement of League commitments? But there were no League commitments. The League, Article Sixteen, did not exist. Most of the powers that entered the War against Germany had no clear previous obligations so to do. Their hands were free. Obviously this freedom from commitment did not keep those powers out for they were all drawn in. But if Mr. Lloyd George and so many other witnesses are right, commitment *would* have kept them out. If Germany had known that by following a certain line of policy a dozen considerable nations would take the field against her, she would not have followed that line of policy and there would have been no war.

Again, the obvious truth is turned simply upside

CONDITIONS OF EFFECTIVE DEFENCE

down. In a condition of free hands, absence of clear commitment, a whole world went to war. By the testimony of the very best of all the witnesses, if there *had* been 'entanglement' and commitment, there would have been no world war. The conclusion commonly drawn is that the way to avoid war is to have no pre-commitment.

At the foundation of the two fallacies just outlined lies a curiously childlike view of the nature of defence and of attack. One hears commonly in this discussion that if we are strong we shall not be attacked. And if you ask what is meant by attack, the reply is usually actual invasion or attempted invasion of territory.

Let us apply again the test of undeniable fact, event, experience, history.

Taking the last thousand years, Great Britain has fought many wars. Not one since the Norman Conquest has been fought on British soil. Our Navy and our Armies have gone into the uttermost corners of the earth.

Our history in this respect is not singular. Remote, isolated, detached, disentangled America in her short history as an independent state has had many foreign wars. Not one of them to repel invasion. (The war in the Mediterranean against the Barbary States; the war of 1912; the war against Mexico; the operations in China, in Cuba, in Nicaragua, in Mexico; the war against Spain; the war in the Philippines; the war in France; the war in Russia.) American soldiers have landed on foreign soil a score of times. Were those

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

British and American wars all, therefore, aggressive wars? By no means. But plainly they were not merely defensive of soil. They were defensive of interests, rights, ultimately in the last analysis, of one fundamental right; the right of defence; that is to say, the right not to be pushed into a position of such manifest inferiority that it is impossible to 'hold our end up', if we differ from another as to what our rights are.

Defence then means clearly defence of vital interests, rights. And for that we feel we must be stronger than anyone likely to challenge them. See where it leaves the situation. A great state says to another:

'To be secure we must have preponderance of power. But we give you our most positive assurance that the preponderance will be used entirely for defence. That is to say, when we get into a dispute as to our respective interests and rights, and the question really is whether you are right or we are right, what we mean by defence is that in such a situation we shall always be in a position to be sole judge of the question.'

Does the other accept? He regards it, as we should, as morally outrageous. It is a method of defence based upon a denial of right, denial to the weaker of that right of defence by superior power, and right of judgment in his own dispute, which the stronger claims.

Note how it has worked out in European history, the recent history of our days.

Before the War we saw that if the power of Germany grew much more she would be so preponderant

CONDITIONS OF EFFECTIVE DEFENCE

that we should be deprived of all means of defending our rights. In any discussion with her, we should be obliged to yield to her view, to allow her, one of the litigants, to be the judge. This position of defencelessness was one which we felt no free people should occupy. So far we were right; not so right when we went on to add that the proper alternative was for Germany to be the weaker. To prove to her that she need have no misgivings in occupying such a position we made the Treaty of Versailles. Looking at it to-day, the Germans say: 'That is what comes of being weaker than your enemy. You never get justice. To get justice you must be stronger than the foreigner.' They are, therefore, building up their power with the determination to assert their view of their rights, if necessary to write a new Treaty. It will not be better than the one we wrote. It will be worse. We may be among its victims. If we are, we shall have to do what the Germans are now doing: Build up our power to correct an unjust treaty — by war. When it comes and we are victorious, we shall write a new treaty, Number 3. It will naturally, inevitably, be worse than Number 1, there being so many more wrongs to avenge. Then must come of course a new war for a new treaty worse than any of its predecessors.

§

What is the way out?

There is no way out unless we can somehow manage to put power behind a code which shall offer

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

to 'the other side' the same principle of protection which we claim for ourselves as, e.g., a mutually defended system of arbitration.

Mere recession before the power of the other side does not bring it any nearer, it makes it more remote. So long as a disputant believes he can enforce his own judgment he will not favour impartial judgment. Note the present alternatives.

Certain clear and definite obligations repeatedly affirmed by Government spokesmen have now been assumed by us irrespective of the Covenant. They include the obligation to defend France, on the ground that the security of France is indispensable to our own.

Assume that we have to implement that very definite promise, and find ourselves, as we found ourselves in the years 1914-18, resisting a great onslaught which sweeps dangerously towards the Channel coasts; in a situation, indeed, far more precarious than that which faced us in the Great War, for we should almost certainly not have on our side powers that were then our allies, and would quite probably face those erstwhile allies as enemies.

When we thus face, not aided as we were in the last War by Russia, Italy, Japan and the United States, vast hostile forces, whether on the soil of France, or on the sea, or in the air, and there is offered to us in that extremity the help of potentially the greatest military power in the world, should we refuse or accept the offer?

CONDITIONS OF EFFECTIVE DEFENCE

In other words, are we to have the help of Russia (to say nothing of Poland, Czechoslovakia and certain other states) in meeting the next attack upon France? When the situation of appalling jeopardy I have suggested has actually arisen, refusal of the aid of Russia or the other states would be regarded by our people as the act of madmen or of traitors; or of reactionaries anxious to see the democracies of the Empire and of France overcome and replaced by totalitarian systems.

Very many who at this moment boggle at 'Eastern Commitments' argue that we should allow the situation to arise before seeking the co-operation of Eastern allies in our common defence. It would be too late. Too late, that is, to deter the aggressor, to prevent war, which once it comes makes 'defence' a tragic mockery, remembering what so many witnesses have testified that the Great War came because the potential aggressor did not know that he would have to meet the forces which he did meet.

A few years since some of our people were as averse to giving the necessary guarantees to France as they now are to giving guarantees to Czechoslovakia or Russia. Averse for the very good reason that an unconditional undertaking to defend France would be an encouragement to the worst and most provocative side of French policy, like that which prompted the occupation of the Ruhr.

But the way to meet that difficulty was not to withhold guarantees which, firmly given, would have

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

made it easier for France to be moderate, but to secure guarantees from her that her conduct would conform to certain principles, such as, for instance, submission of disputes to third party judgment, so that 'the other side' also had means of security – the proviso which constitutes the difference between the old alliance method and the collective system.

Put in different terms, we should undertake to sustain a certain rule of international life, or, if you prefer so to call it, covenant, which, resolutely upheld, would ensure the defence of those party to it.

Note then the situation:

We are unequivocally committed to the defence of France and may have to defend her against attack from the East, in which case we shall need urgently the aid of Russia and will certainly accept it if offered. But if the combined power is to deter the potential aggressor we must be in a position to say beforehand to him that he will have to face that combination. If he is uncertain as to whether we should ever co-operate with Russia or not he may gamble upon Russia's absence – or our neutrality if previously he 'eliminates' Russia.

But even so this constitutes an alliance of the old type: to the power of one combination we oppose another. If we are stronger the other is without defence; if he is stronger we are.

To avoid that repetition of the pre-War situation we must make it clear to the other side that the principles of defence which we claim for ourselves – right to

CONDITIONS OF EFFECTIVE DEFENCE

third party judgment and freedom from attack – we offer equally to him. We ask him to join the combination provided he will accept its conditions. But the moment we do that, says the ‘realist’, we turn an innocent alliance into a mischievous collective security arrangement full of hidden dangers. The ‘realist’ agrees that we must use arms or be prepared to use them; agrees that we must have allies (we have them). But from the moment that the alliance of which we are members offers to the other side the same rights we claim for ourselves it is pronounced to be a dangerous combination full of ‘commitments and entanglements’.

Despite the immense amount of discussion that still rages round the subject, one may doubt whether some of our great publicists have managed to sift out the issues involved in the collective method of defence. Thus ‘Scrutator’ (*Sunday Times*, April 14, 1934) argues that it is no use building up a collective *bloc* for peace, because a much solider *bloc* than we could now hope to create did not preserve the peace in 1914. Under the heading ‘Remember 1914’, he writes:

‘What made the World War was not the quarrel between Austria and Serbia as it then was, nor even the political rivalry between Germany and Russia in the gates of the East, but the system of alliances and counter-alliances which blew up a local quarrel into a world conflagration. . . .

‘The beginning of wisdom in Europe is to realise that this mischief of alliances and counter-alliances is

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

just as dangerous now as in 1914, and is not in the least mended by calling it collective security or invoking the name of the League of Nations. The letter kills; only in the spirit is there health. It follows that we shall mediate most effectually in proportion as we keep our independence. . . .

‘Though the doctrine may be unfashionable these days – there is solid political virtue in minding your own business and keeping your own doorstep clean.’

And ‘Scrutator’ adds this strange passage:

‘And if we had known in 1914 that we should be joined by the United States, Italy, and Japan, and that all the Dominions would rush to our assistance, should we not then have been more confident in this collective security than we have any right to be in a combination between Russia, Italy, and France now – with Russia threatened by Japan, Italy ill at ease with Yugoslavia, Poland covering the German eastern Frontier, and the United States not even belatedly in the struggle this time on our side? Yet that system of collective security did not prevent the Great War.’

Let us disentangle a few tangles.

The alliances which preceded the War did not represent a collective system at all. They lacked nearly all the elements indispensable thereto and which the League was created to supply. The essence of collective defence is that it should represent a combination of power sustaining a rule which will afford some measure of protection to all members, membership being completely open to the potential or putative aggressor. The power of the Allied combination in 1914 did not offer protection

CONDITIONS OF EFFECTIVE DEFENCE

to Germany; there was no element of mutual assistance, no promise to her to protect her against aggression (as for instance from Russia) in return for peaceful settlement of disputes. She had nothing to depend upon for the defence of her rights in any dispute except her own power to overcome her rivals, so that our power was a menace to her as hers was a menace to us. The grand alliance did not exist as a peace combination at all and the power of, say, America, did not have and could not possibly have had deterrent effect upon aggressive tendencies in Germany, since the latter had no faintest reason in 1914 to suppose that American power would be used against her. Had Germany known in the years preceding the War that by following a given line she would have brought half the world into the field against her; if she had known that those States which ultimately had to fight, would fight, there would have been no war. Freedom from commitment did not keep out the states that later came in. Commitment would have kept them out. If force is to deter in a given circumstance, it must be known beforehand what the circumstance is and that the force will be used, always keeping in mind that power which is simply coercive, offering to those at whom it is aimed no alternative but sheer submission, will fail. The armed law within the state does not merely say to the individual citizen: 'Break the law and we imprison you.' It gains its permanent power from the fact that the law also says: 'Observe the law and it will protect you.' The League, supported by

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

the power of its constituent members, offers in return for support, security. Unless it does this, it does not embody in any proper sense of the term a collective system at all. The old pre-War type of Alliance embodied no such system of mutual defence. The larger grouping of the Allied powers did not, indeed, exist as a peace-time fact. To describe it therefore as a 'system of collective security' is to play with words, and deprive them of meaning.

§

Recently the Press have been printing letters from readers giving their views of the German demands. In discussing this question, whether the German demands should be granted or not, whether Germany intends peace, practically none of the letters published goes outside such considerations as whether the Versailles Treaty was just or not or whether Germany can be 'trusted'; or whether the Germans desire peace or not. Not in one single case, which a cursory examination of the correspondence reveals, is there reflected the truth that none of these questions is fundamental to the problem of peace or war.

Let it be granted that the Versailles Treaty is outrageously unjust; that Germany's motives are the best; that she desires peace. But let us also face the possibility that Herr Hitler is sincere and really believes what he wrote before coming to power: that he and his colleagues share with a great many high-minded Englishmen the belief that internationalism

CONDITIONS OF EFFECTIVE DEFENCE

in any form is an evil and immoral idea; that its advocacy reveals a weakening of moral fibre; that intense nationalism, belief in one's country 'right or wrong,' is the first and last political virtue and that, though we may want peace, belief in the possibility of its permanence is nationalist heresy, proof of a degenerate tendency, high treason to the state. Why should we suppose such a doctrine (vividly expressed the other day by General Ludendorf, who declared that 'for a people to limit its armaments is an offence against the most sacred and divine laws') is not a living reality among ruling Germans when one may hear it daily expounded on the dinner tables of Cheltenham or in the columns of fashionable London dailies? We may safely assume not merely that Hitler and his colleagues are completely sincere, but that their conviction on these points has passionate and religious intensity.

What we have to consider, then, is not the goodness or badness of German 'intentions', or whether Germany is to be 'trusted', but the workability of that particular doctrine in the maintenance of European peace. The question is not whether Germany wants peace but whether she can be brought to see that Ludendorffism is incompatible with it. It is a question of understanding, not intention. Incidentally if it were possible to base peace upon the old assumptions, there would be no sense in turning to a new, difficult and unfamiliar method. The international organisation of defence is being

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

discussed just because the national has broken down. Germany's 'intentions' in standing by the effort to secure preponderant national power are not only good; they are, from her own point of view, as Ludendorff would put it, 'divinely inspired'; and as for being 'trusted', he would explain that good Germans (and the Nazis are now seeing that every German becomes a good German or goes into a concentration camp) can be trusted to stand by what they 'know' to be the will of God. What, in these circumstances, is the relevance of discussing German 'sincerity' or 'goodwill'—when goodwill must mean in the terms of such doctrine goodwill towards the divinely-inspired order of German domination or eternal war?

For some years now it has been evident that the real question is not whether the Versailles Treaty is just or unjust, whether it needs revision or not, but whether Germany is to be the sole judge of the nature of the revision. The Treaty has, in fact, been radically revised, and Germany was invited to negotiate on terms of equality concerning further revision. Her reply, as Sir Austen Chamberlain pointed out, was to seize by her own one-sided action what she had been asked to confer about. A similar general line marked her withdrawal from the League: she withdrew at the very moment that the principle of full equality of status was in process of being conceded. She so timed withdrawal indeed that one would almost say her action was an attempt to forestall the free concession. If so, it would be

CONDITIONS OF EFFECTIVE DEFENCE

entirely in keeping with Nationalist doctrine, the doctrine that it is humiliating to have to negotiate with foreigners at all. True national dignity demands that the nation shall be in a position to impose its will by its own power. (A young Nazi 'regretted' the peaceful outcome of the Saar question and was sorrowful that German rights had not been gained by German blood.)

When one reads daily comments which plainly assume that peace can be secured in the frame-work of the old anarchy by remedy of specific grievances, that revision of the Versailles Treaty is itself the key to peace, one can only wonder at the shortness of public memory. Were we suffering under a Versailles Treaty when we entered a war which every honest observer knows we would have entered, whether there had been the Belgian issue or not? As a dozen other states entered without that particular commitment? Relations between this country and Germany were better on the eve of the War, as Mr. Winston Churchill reminded us the other day, than they had been for a long time. We entered the War because German victory would have deprived us of defence; as our victory has deprived Germany of defence. The Germans challenged our naval power because they feared it would one day be used, as indeed it was used, as an instrument helping to impose upon them utterly unjust conditions. All that is inseparable from the old system with whatever goodwill it may be worked.

Let us assume that we could make concessions to

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

Germany so enormous as to restore all that she possessed in 1914. Not merely the African colonies, not merely the Far Eastern stations, not merely her reverent interest in the Portuguese Colonies; not merely her power by Austrian and Turkish alliances over the roads to the East, which gave her potential hegemony in Asia Minor; not merely a great place in world trade, but all her pre-War European territory as well – Dantzic, Memel, the Corridor, great slices of what are now Poland and Czechoslovakia and France. Suppose in other words we could restore the pre-War Germany. That would be ‘concessions’ indeed. Would it in the absence of any fundamental change of system mean peace? Then why did it not mean peace in 1914?

The truth is, of course, that it was not the Kaiser’s wickedness, or Germany’s wickedness which made the War, as most historical witnesses are now ready to testify. In respect of her nationalism and militarism Germany was little worse than her neighbours on the West and the East. The War was the result of an international anarchy which can only secure the defence of one by killing that of the other. What was wrong with our policy was not that it opposed Germany’s hegemony, but that it imposed our own as the right alternative. Because Allied domination has not brought peace, there seems to be a muddled assumption that now Germany’s domination would; that our retreat before her makes for peace. The idea needs examination.

CHAPTER V

PEACE AND THE POLICY OF RETREAT

Nations put defence before peace. The two can only be combined by giving power to a principle (e.g. third party judgment) which will protect both parties to a dispute. Constant retreat of one will not secure this. What litigant convinced of his rightness would submit to law if sure that he could of his own force impose his view on the other party? Sometimes submission to violence makes growth of the law's power impossible.

FOR some years after the War Germany maintained a great experiment of defencelessness, non-resistance, and the experiment so far as achieving security was concerned, was entirely successful. For nearly a decade after the War, despite considerable evasion of the disarmament clauses of the Treaty, Germany was impotent to resist even invasion, as the invasion of the Ruhr demonstrated. She submitted without fighting. The policy was successful in the sense that the invader had to go home again and Germany suffered infinitely less by non-resistance than she would have suffered had she been armed and had resisted. But the entire success of this policy did not convert Germany to it. When a leader arose demanding as

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

the very first right of Germany the right to armed defence, the whole nation responded with fanaticism and passion. Armaments have not made Germany more secure. She is less secure to-day than she was when unarmed, but there is no chance that she will return to the policy of armlessness or that others will imitate her successful non-resistance.

This bit of history should convey a profound psychological lesson in connection with the policy of retreat which Britain has been following and which is sketched in the next chapter. The defeat of Germany has not increased the chances of establishing a better European system, particularly a better system of general defence. Defeat did not cure her militarism (any more than it cured the militarism of France in 1871). For a period it seems to have done so, and might have done so if the Allies had responded to the mood which marked the first years of the Weimar Republic by making to that régime the concessions which later were made to the Hitlerite dictatorship.

The fault, if you will, lies with the Allies. Victory and triumph did not give us wisdom. Why should we expect that cheaper triumphs, achieved by dictatorship states, will give them wisdom. Why should we expect in other words that our defeat (for there may be defeats without war) would give more secure peace than the defeat of Germany did? That defeat in our case would have very different psychological effects, or that the corresponding victory of

PEACE AND THE POLICY OF RETREAT

those before whom we recede, will make them any wiser than victory made us?

Peace undoubtedly could be secured by non-resistance and retreat if – the ‘if’ is vast, of cosmic proportions – it could consistently be followed by virtually a whole population, all parties and all creeds for a very long period. But that asks too much of too many.

The German case, like the case of every state that has come to think of itself as a sovereign entity, proves that the problem which confronts us is to combine peace with defence. It may be worth while to surrender defence for peace but the simple truth is that no nation in the world is at present prepared to do it. Not merely the German nation and the British Empire but even the lesser states of the world put defence before peace: they would go to war rather than surrender defence.

The previous chapter has attempted to show how the two may be combined: the defence of one must not kill the defence of the other. If power is used it must be the instrument of some rule (like third-party judgment, freedom from attack) under which all who contribute to the power may find equal right and security.

Such equality of right cannot, it is true, be achieved by mere bulldog resistance to those who challenge our view. Two can play at that game. Peace can never be secured by letting the litigants fight it out and by allowing the stronger to impose his judgment on the weaker. But just as little can it be secured by one of

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

the litigants retreating indefinitely before the threats of the other without fighting. What litigant convinced of his rightness would submit to law if sure that he could of his own power impose his view on the other party? In some circumstances submission to violence, far from 'transferring power from the litigants to the law' makes growth of the law's power impossible. The failure to check Italy did not add to the general sense of security in Europe nor to the sense that justice can be made to prevail in the international field. It has had the exactly contrary effect, as the whole world knows, of increasing the sense of insecurity and bitter cynicism; the feeling that there is no justice, no fairness in international politics, that force and chicane are the only things that count.

As the nature of the retreats sketched in the next chapter are examined it will be found that their main motive was certainly not to strengthen any system of law. Some at least of those who urged retreat were prepared to place the Empire in jeopardy rather than that it should become subject to law.

Nor was the motive pacifist. The fact that we are armed to a greater extent than ever before in our history, means that at some point we shall defend our position; that we shall reject mere retreat and submission as a permanent policy; that at some point we shall fight, when our 'direct' interest is plainly involved.

The implications of that obvious fact are quite com-

PEACE AND THE POLICY OF RETREAT

monly overlooked in this discussion. One of the most frequent objections to the collective system is that it is illogical to base a system of peace upon arrangements to go to war. That objection may be valid in the mouth of those who are prepared for unilateral disarmament, prepared to accept non-resistance, armlessness, but not from those who urge armaments. For armaments mean that we shall go to war when we consider our own vital interests demand it, when some foreign power has, in our view, gone 'a bit too far'. The difference between defence under any pre-War system and collective defence is not in the possession of arms – both systems demand arms; it is not in the possession of allies – both systems demand allies. The difference between the two systems is this: Under the old system a state made *ad hoc* arrangements for allies. ('If you will support me as against A I will support you as against B.') The making of allies was often left until after the War had actually begun, so that the putative enemy did not know what forces he would have to meet; did not know indeed what a rival combination would regard as 'aggression' or 'attack'; what it would resent by arms and what not.

Collective defence on the other hand implies a system by which members of a group make clear beforehand that they stand in common for some rule, or defensive principle – as, for instance, submission of disputes to arbitration and abstention from war to enforce their own verdict in a dispute – and that they offer the protection of the same rule to all who agree

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

to support it. If the arrangement is genuine at all, the potential aggressor knows what will be regarded as aggression, attack, and what forces he will have to meet.

The question which we have to decide, therefore, in the light alike of logic and experience, especially the experience of the Great War, is whether we are more or less likely to have to fight at all if both we and the putative enemy know beforehand precisely what we defend, what we shall regard as attack and who will stand with us in defending such policy.

A concrete illustration may clarify the point.

If a foreign state should present us with an ultimatum which, in effect, would mean: 'Cede your colonies or fight,' would the colonies be ceded? A state making such a demand might deem, in the present condition of British opinion, that there was quite a good chance that we should yield. In Britain at this moment both the extreme Left and the extreme Right seem to favour such cession. We have the strange spectacle of those papers which for years led the anti-German campaign, which agitated for astronomical Reparations and the most ruthless peace, now favouring the cession of colonies to Germany.¹ The leader of the British Fascists similarly favours the cession of colonies, as do, at the other political pole, certain Pacifist groups. Many Imperialists who do not favour cession of colonies insist that the possession of

¹ See e.g. Lord Rothermere's articles favouring the return of German colonies.

PEACE AND THE POLICY OF RETREAT

colonies is not merely advantageous but indispensable as a source of raw material and markets and thus strengthen the claims of the 'Have-Nots'. Further, and most importantly, the states making such demands have seen Great Britain submit again and again to the threat of force what she had refused to a state possessing less power. (The difference of our attitude towards the Weimar Republic and the Hitlerite dictatorship illustrates the point.) The long story of recession before Japan, Italy, Germany and even Franco (though at the moment of writing there seems to be a reaction against submission to Franco) might tempt a Have-Not state to gamble upon our surrendering once more if the threat were sufficiently violent.

If, however, we refused to cede, and we were led into a war waged to retain the ex-German colonies, upon what allies could we count? Since, ultimately, the strength of a nation's defensive position depends upon who is with it and who against it, we should have to compare the possibilities of war for the retention of territory in those conditions with the defensive possibilities of another policy. We could, for instance, say in effect, that we would not cede colonies to force, but that we *were* prepared to discuss throwing open all colonies on terms of complete equality, and were prepared to discuss methods of making the guarantee a reality and not a sham; and we could seek allies for the defence of such a position.

In seeking the aid of others in the support of this

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

latter position we would naturally point out that if access to raw materials and markets is really what is sought, the policy we proposed to uphold provides such access to all alike and not merely to those who happen to be momentarily strong. Such a policy would be characteristically collective in that the rule or principle would be protective of the interests of those supporting it; that we ourselves were prepared to abide by the rule we offered to others.

One may perhaps safely assume that such an international régime, if established, would suit our economic needs better than one in which colonies had been ceded to a foreign state to be thereupon closed to us; that we could obtain more support, more allies, for the policy of the door open to all than for the privilege of retaining an empire closed to others. By far the greater security, alike political and economic, inheres in the former of the two courses.

But it is not the course we have been pursuing.

The story of retreat which follows indicates that we have got further and further away from such a policy; that the effect of such retreat is to diminish still further the chances of making the policy effective. Our course would seem to have been based on the assumption that we could continue steadily worsening our strategic position and then ultimately be strong enough of our own power to resist, without allies, not merely any one of the states to which we had yielded but even a combination of them, and to wage such a war not on behalf of a situation which others have an

PEACE AND THE POLICY OF RETREAT

interest in defending but on behalf of a privileged position for ourselves as against Have-Not powers.

One further point needs mentioning. If our national policy is based on the principle that we will fight to defend our possessions and interests but not for any general principle of right; if we are to be militarist when our 'property' is touched but Pacifist when it comes to fighting for a better international order, then it is almost certain that the youth of this country will decide to be Pacifist at all times. It may well be that for this order of reasons also collective defence is the only possible defence. If the long story of retreat means that we refuse to fight for any international system or order which might give peace, and our heavy armaments mean that we will fight to defend our possessions, and only fight for that purpose, then the British youth may well decide that all war is a dirty and immoral business and we shall find the doctrine of Pure Pacifism spreading even more rapidly than at present.

It is in the light of these preliminary considerations that we should study the story which follows.

CHAPTER VI

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

The cumulative effect of the policy adopted by Great Britain during the last seven years in the case of the Manchurian, Abyssinian, Rhineland and Spanish affairs and of the German effort to re-create a European hegemony, can only be appreciated by considering the story as a whole; taking into account the effect which 'imperialist' opinion, as expressed in Britain in each of those cases, must have upon the policy of foreign militarist states in future crises; and by noting the effect upon our relations with America especially as bearing upon Britain's exercise of sea-power. The new attitude to German hegemony reverses the policy of the War. Can it be reconciled with any system of imperial security or with any system of peace?

Is there any general realisation how far retreat has gone and to what degree each successive surrender has made ultimate resistance increasingly difficult?

An outsider, coming into a room where people have been sitting for some time finds the atmosphere close and foul; says so, to the surprise of those present. The change because gradual had been unnoticed. Only when we put the piecemeal surrenders together

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

and estimate the total effect do we realise the significance.

Let us take stock.

Note the conditions which before the War we regarded as indispensable to a secure British Empire. They were (1) command of the sea by the force of the British Navy alone, usually maintained at a two-power, sometimes a three-power standard; (2) maintenance of a dominant, unchallengeable position in Asia; (3) as indispensable to those conditions maintenance of the route to India and the antipodes through the Mediterranean; (4) the Balance of Power, resistance, that is, to the domination of the continent by any one power so that it could at its discretion not merely occupy the Channel ports and render the Mediterranean untenable, but could at any moment demonstrate the possession of such superiority of force as to make any effort at defence or resistance on our part obviously futile. After all under the old, and existing, conditions of international life this last is the determining condition of defence: if a rival is so plainly superior to you as to make it impossible to resist him you have lost your means of defence. Fighting may then be heroic but will certainly be futile.

Before the War not only were these conditions put forward as indispensable to imperial security, but we were able to see that they were fulfilled. We did command the sea by something like a two-power standard; we did maintain a dominant position in

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

Asia; our strategic position in the Mediterranean was accepted as virtually unchallengeable as we did manage to maintain what we called the Balance of Power (which of course really meant a potential preponderance of power on our side as against any probable rival).

In 1914 command of the sea enabled us to ensure that from the very outset of the struggle the vast resources of America would be at our disposal and denied to the enemy, since under the law of neutrality, as she then read it, she was prepared to sell to any belligerent who could (*a*) come and fetch the goods, and (*b*) pay for them. Our Navy enabled us to do the first, and our foreign investments and credit with America the second.

Compare that situation with the present. We have surrendered naval predominance and accepted parity with the United States – incidentally a wise decision on one condition which we do not, however, happen to have fulfilled. Japan is now claiming parity. If precedent be followed we shall acquiesce. Secondly, we no longer occupy a dominant, unchallenged position in Asia. We have receded repeatedly before Japan, and to quote a first-hand student of Japan, ‘If Japan once acquire hegemony over China, whether directly or in camouflaged forms, India will be menaced by a mightier and more dangerous enemy than any to be found in the Mediterranean. . . . Leave Japan to proceed in China and she may one day realise the dream of her ruling classes, become

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

the mistress of Asia and cast her shadow over the whole world.' Thirdly, our strategic position in the Mediterranean, first as the result of Italian conquest of Abyssinia, then of the probable outcome of German-Italian intervention in Spain has become so precarious that more than one eminent strategist is now urging what amounts to evacuation of the Mediterranean and reversion to the Cape route. Fourthly, the Balance of Power has been modified as the result of the factors and of the events recorded below. Fifthly, command of the sea, even if secured, would not automatically ensure the flood of American arms and supplies which it did in 1914.

But the foregoing is only the least disturbing part of the story. In the Great War we just scraped through with Russia, Italy, Japan and the United States on our side; with the command of the sea maintained and the Mediterranean route kept open. What would have been the chances of victory if Russia had not entered the War at all, if Italy and Japan had fought on the other side, if America had, not merely not entered the War, but put an embargo upon munitions to all belligerents, had refused all credit for the purchases of materials; and if the Mediterranean route had been closed?

This is often cited as proof that collective defence could never be practicable. What it really proves is that the British Empire cannot possibly defend itself without allies, save that is by some form of collective defence. Yet the fact which stands out most

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

prominently in the story of the first (that in the Far East) of the series of retreats sketched below, is the curious rejection by Britain of an insistent American offer to co-operate in resistance as an alternative to submission.

It has been previously noted that the decision to accept naval parity with the United States was, even from an old-imperialist point of view, a wise decision, namely, that every possible opportunity should be seized to secure identity of policy between the United States and ourselves; to seize every opportunity of co-operation, and particularly to develop such relationship that the old conflict about freedom of the seas should never in the future arise.

One had supposed that this need for close Anglo-American co-operation was recognised by every section of British opinion. It had been a popular theme that Britain and America could by their sole might impose peace on the world. The extremest isolationists in Britain made an exception in the case of the United States. Very well.

What policy have we pursued in that respect? On two occasions of major crises when we were declaring at the top of our voices that our position was extremely weak, too weak to do anything but recede, we were offered American co-operation, and rejected it, preferring retreat to resistance in common with the United States. On the first occasion, that of the Far Eastern Crisis, when the United States not only offered their co-operation and support but urgently

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

begged us to make common cause with her in resistance to Japan, we rejected the plea, as we shall see in a moment, so casually, so curtly, as gravely to offend an American administration which was more than usually well disposed to us. Later on, when the United States offered to take a line which would have settled for all time in our favour the old conflict with America about belligerent rights at sea we rejected the opportunity of that settlement, preferring retreat before the threats of a nation that we had yesterday regarded as a second-rate power.

Let us take the Far Eastern matter first.

For over a century we have always recognised the importance of China in our economic and political scheme of things. Britain's dependence upon foreign trade makes the future of the greatest potential market and field for investment in the world – that of 450,000,000 civilised, sturdy, industrious people – a matter of fundamental, of primary importance.

Anyone with pad and pencil can figure out the astonishing totals in trade with 450,000,000 people. An American authority notes that an enthusiastic Californian recently showed that prosperity could be well-nigh restored to the Pacific coast if every Chinese could be persuaded to buy just one California prune each week!

Although Japan's interests in China are very important, other states also have rights and interests there. In investments in China, excluding Manchuria, the British have approximately three times

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

the amount of the Japanese. The British investments of all kinds total roughly about \$1,190,000,000, in terms of the old American gold dollar; the Japanese, \$400,000,000, and the American \$234,000,000. In commerce the United States had for the years 1932 and 1933 more trade with China, excluding Manchuria, than had either the Japanese Empire or Great Britain. For 1933 the trade with China of the three leading countries was as follows: United States, \$410,614,000 (Chinese currency); Japan, \$228,156,000; and Great Britain, \$202,806,000.¹

The political are as important as the economic considerations. Our position in India, rendered already extremely difficult by the growth of a nationalism which resents the presence of European rule, as well as considerations connected with the defence of Australia and New Zealand, makes us concerned with the Balance of Power in the Far East, with such developments as the growth of a great Asiatic Empire at the expense of the integrity of China.

With a view to protecting our position we had built up an elaborate series of treaties, political, military and economic, particularly with reference to the future of China. In the two objectives of the 'open door' and the integrity of China we had had the close co-operation of the United States.

Recall what happened. Choosing a moment when Britain had just been forced off the gold standard and

¹ These figures are taken from Professor Blakeslee's monograph, *Conflicts of Policy in the Far East*.

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

was in the throes not only of a grave financial crisis but of a political one as well (when the first National Government was being formed), Japan took, by the invasion of Manchuria, the first step in what was in fact a comprehensive defiance to the West—which included the United States—and the assertion of Japanese hegemony in Asia, tearing up treaties, announcing that the Far East was her pigeon and asking us what we proposed to do about it. Note the degree of Japanese defiance. By 1934 the Japanese Government was able formally to give notice to the world that 'Japan reserved to herself a special position' in China; that she would oppose energetically any move towards interference in or assistance given to that country by the Western Powers; that, in effect, an Asiatic Monroe Doctrine would be applied in full by Japan in her relations with the Asiatic mainland. On the occasion of Japan's formal withdrawal from the League Mr. Matsuoko informed the Press that

Anyone will recognise that no power on earth can check our advance. The sooner it is realised and the world powers recognise it, the better it will be for the welfare of the world.

A year later a high official in Tokyo sums up the position:

Europe and America possess no more political interests in East Asia than we possess in the European or American continents.

The assertion of this Japanese Monroe Doctrine has

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

been marked by a tone of challenge which in pre-War relations between states of equal power would have been regarded as equivalent to a declaration of war. The Japanese ambassador in Washington stated in December 1934 that

Japan hopes that Great Britain and the United States understand her policy, but – if, however, the United States and Britain failed to understand and attempted forcibly to swerve us from our course, then Japan would be forced to fight.

It will be seen from the foregoing that Japanese statesmen do not deign to disguise their ambitions. They proclaim them from the housetops.

‘Talk with Japanese naval and military officers, especially late at night when they are unguarded in their speech, as I have talked with them,’ writes Commander Kenworthy,¹ ‘and they make no secret of their hopes. They look upon Anglo-Saxon democracy as effete, materialistic, pleasure-mad.’

The Japanese military party make no bones about their general approval of the ‘Tanaka Plan’, whether Tanaka ever in fact wrote the report on which the plan is based or not. The plan forecasts control of all Manchuria south of the Eastern Chinese Railway, running from the Trans-Siberian railway across Northern Manchuria by way of Harbin and Vladivostock. Inner Mongolia, the Tartar province north of the Great Wall, is to be penetrated and controlled through Mongolian Princes in Japanese pay.

¹ *The Outlook*, March 1932.

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

The Yangtse Valley is the next objective, thus giving control of Central China; and later, Canton, controlling Southern China. In the course of some years, after consolidation, most of China would be controlled through puppet generals and mandarins, or under direct Japanese administration.

French Indo-China comes next, and, later, the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies. The way would then be opened to threaten India across her north-east frontier, which is practicable with modern means of transport, especially the aeroplane.

The Japanese imperialists believe that India must always have a strong alien government to hold her together and to impose rule from above. Outer Mongolia and Eastern Siberia can wait their turn. But the ultimate aim is to control all Asia; and the power which controls Asia dominates the world, a view echoed, as we shall see in a moment, by Mr. Henry Stimson.

The Tanaka Memorandum only sets out in complete and detailed form what various War Office pamphlets, General Araki, the famous Black Dragon Society, the other patriot societies, and the young officers have for years been proclaiming from the housetops. General Araki, when War Minister in 1932 and 1933, continually referred to British oppression of the people of India and to Japan's divine mission of pan-Asianism. In 1935 Major-General Tada, Commander of the Japanese garrison in North China, issued a pamphlet to the Japanese Press representatives

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

at Tientsin entitled *The Basic Conception of China*, in which he wrote as follows:

'The international situation — may be regarded as the beginning of a racial war for the emancipation of the coloured people who form the greater part of the human inhabitants of the world from the enslaving oppression by the whites. It is also the beginning of a spiritual war for rectifying the material civilisation of the West by the moral civilisation of the East. Those two great missions from heaven are the natural obligations which our Japanese Empire must bear.'

When Matsudaira arrived in Japan on his return from Europe and reported to the Foreign Minister Hirota, the Japanese Press was full of exultant comments on Britain's recognition of Japan's invincibility. The following extracts are typical:

'The British Government is well aware of the fact that nothing can be done politically or economically in the Far East without Japan's understanding. . . . British civilisation is falling into the background and taking advantage of this opportunity the European powers are beginning to lift their heads. At any rate Britain has lost its weighty power in the world since the Manchurian incident. The Powers have begun to start free actions since Britain has fallen into the background. Britain will gradually be forced to readjust its overseas branch offices as it has lost its fighting spirit.' (*Nagoya Shinaichi*, August 1, 1935.)

'The control of events in the Far East is determined by Japan. Britain has now come to realisation of the fact that she must depend on Japan in the Far East. We Japanese should be magnanimous enough to meet

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

Britain in her new attitude with open arms.' (*Miyako*, August 9, 1935.)¹

There follow demands for the removal of the restrictions on Japanese trade in British Empire markets and on Britain agreeing to Japan's naval claims.

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Was the British retreat in this case due to physical and strategic weakness? That has been the main explanation. But it needs examination.

In his monograph *Conflicts of Policy in the Far East*, Professor Blakeslee, who knows Japan at first hand, insists that all the more sober political elements in Japan are perfectly aware that if it came to war Japan would have no chance against even one power, the United States, to say nothing of a combination of the United States and Great Britain, and Russia. He indicates the obvious rudiments of the situation thus:

'For Japan to precipitate such a war would be "worse than a crime; it would be a blunder". It would, first of all, offer a temptation to Soviet Russia to occupy Manchuria. If Japan should win the war, it would obtain - bankruptcy, Manchuria and a free hand for China. But it has Manchuria now, and no American military forces are operating against Japan in China. What is the use of fighting the United States. If Japan

¹ Miss Freda Utey who gives these extracts comments: 'Japan's present attitude towards Britain recalls in some respects that of Germany before the War. Germany also considered that England was degenerate and weak and unable to defend her vast Empire. But Germany did not, like Japan, at the same time angle for British loans, and Germany was a giant in fact not a bluffer like Japan.' *Japan's Feet of Clay* (Faber and Faber), p. 30.

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

should be defeated – which is more probable – it would be completely crushed economically and financially, and would lose its influence in China, probably Manchuria and possibly Korea as well. It clearly would not pay Japan to risk a war with the United States.'

Note the political situation in which Great Britain recedes.

The United States was urging resistance to Japan and urgently desiring the co-operation of Britain in that resistance; the co-operation of Russia to that end was no less certain, as was that of the bulk of the Chinese people; and the attitude of some fifty other nations may be judged by their subsequent condemnation of Japanese policy. So this is the 'hopeless' situation: On one side is Japan; against her potentially, or actually and actively, are the United States, Russia, China and some fifty states, with Australia, New Zealand, Canada particularly interested in resistance. If the British Empire is powerless to defend its interests in that situation, in what situation can it ever effectively defend itself?

Now the facts which concern us most at this juncture are these: (a) Japan is 'getting away with it' largely by bluff; (b) retirement before that bluff makes it ever more dangerous; (c) if defence means anything we shall have to call a halt at some point; (d) the longer we yield the more difficult and the more dangerous does resistance become.

In her careful and painstaking study *Japan's Feet of Clay*, Miss Freda Utley puts the case thus:

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

'Japan is putting up a big bluff to the world. She started the game of world politics and military aggression with the scantiest of resources, but unless her bluff is soon called she may actually achieve the success which could still easily be prevented.

'Here is a country which claims to be the Britain of the East whose iron production is half that of Belgium, whose maximum coal production is one-seventh and consumption one-fifth, of Britain's. A country which has, it is true, a large navy and mercantile marine, but whose supplies of oil have all to be imported and whose supplies of coal are very scanty. A country, again, which believes it can take Britain's former place as the workshop of the world – or at least of Asia and Africa – yet whose industrial organisation, with the exception of certain specific industries such as armaments, ship-building and textiles, is at a stage of development still in many respects medieval, or at best corresponding to that of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England. Here is an Imperialist Power which produces capital goods – iron, steel and machinery – in such small quantities that far from being able to export them she cannot even supply her own needs, much less those of the colonies which her armies are conquering.'¹

At a later stage she adds two comments; one as follows:

'What is shared in common by all the advocates of an Anglo-Japanese understanding, or of a free hand for Japan in the Far East, is the belief, real or assumed, that neither Britain nor the U.S.A. can stop Japan expanding somewhere on account of her invincible strategic position in the Pacific.

'What is ignored or not realised by all those who

¹ *Japan's Feet of Clay*, Freda Uley (Faber and Faber), p. 9.

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

insist on Japan's invincible position are her economic and social weaknesses.'

The second is even more significant:

'England and the U.S.A. will not for ever be in the favourable position they are in to-day. Leave Japan to proceed in China, be afraid to call her bluff, let her have time, and she will be able with the possession of Chinese iron and coal and cotton, and with the profits from squeezing the masses of the Chinese people, soon to acquire the military invulnerability which she is falsely supposed to have already. In that event she may one day realise the dream of her ruling classes and become the mistress of Asia and of the South Pacific and cast her shadow over the whole world.'

It is quite true of course as Mr. Henry Stimson in his book *The Far Eastern Crises* points out: 'Sooner or later Japan would learn that she could not permanently dominate and exploit by ancient methods a much larger nation than herself composed of people the intellectual and spiritual equals of her own.' But as he adds with equal truth, 'This process might take ages and in the meanwhile much harm to the rest of the world would be done by the far-reaching disturbances which it would inevitably excite. There are, however, some very real and important problems left for us to solve in warding off and minimising such evils.'

'The ultimate consequences of this Japanese turn towards China cannot be gauged; but it is serious for the Western Powers,' comments Mr. Graham

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

Hutton: 'If the Canton ("Red") Government makes common cause with the Nanking ("National") Government—as one day it is bound to do,' in Mr. Hutton's view, 'the sooner if Japanese pressure on China increases—any Japanese attack on China from the North, where Japanese forces are well "dug in", will mean war with, and over, all China.

'As soon as that happens the position of Hong Kong and of all Chinese Treaty Ports becomes equivocal. For the railway from Hankow down to the hinterland of Canton has just been completed. If Canton and Nanking have to fight Japan together, they will retire inland, leaving the coastline at the mercy of the Japanese Navy. But Hong Kong is British, adjoining which lies Canton, the seat of the "Red" Government; and naturally the Japanese will send an ultimatum to Britain demanding the cessation of all supplies through Hong Kong to the hinterland, through which they can reach both the north and south. What will then be the attitude of the British Government?

'The British Government,' he thinks, 'would then have to choose between fighting over Hong Kong, or accepting Japanese dictation—which means the end of Hong Kong, and the retreat of the British in the Far East to Singapore. It is tolerably certain that the United States would hardly after the experience presently to be related be very disposed to make common cause with us.

'If Hong Kong and South China go, the overland route to Tibet and India goes; and Singapore can be

¹ *Is it Peace?* A Study in Foreign Affairs by Graham Hutton: Duckworth.

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

made to look meaningless once Japan is supreme in the China Sea and her own home waters.' These are logical implications of the train of events which was set going, and allowed to proceed, in 1931 and 1932. Mr. Hutton adds:

'The Far Eastern prospect must of necessity be far more disturbing to any British Government than to the Russian or American Governments. For the British have too many isolated possessions in the Pacific, all admirably adapted to that policy of "nibbling" which the Japanese have contrived with consummate ability to pursue in the face of disinterested British Governments. And, in future, the British Empire will not be permitted to cope with trouble in one region at a time. To this extent, the Far East must remain a discomfiting preoccupation in the minds of British political leaders, whether in London or in Capetown, New Delhi, Canberra and Auckland.'

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The retreat in the Far East has thus been marked by the curious situation which has characterised the crises which followed. It was the weaker party which did the sabre rattling, the threatening; the stronger (at least potentially, and probably actually) which submitted. Recklessness and lawlessness here as in Abyssinia and in the Rhineland, was successful (as it may be in Spain). Those who in Japan, in Italy, in Germany counselled moderation and prudence have been discredited. The 'boldness' of the dictators has carried the day.

If our policy were definitely one of non-resistance

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

there might be no particular danger in these submissions. But we accompany retreat with an immense programme of rearmament which means that at some point we shall fight; and we accompany the rearmament with a policy of crude refusal to co-operate with necessary Allies (e.g., Russia, and the United States) which means that we shall fight under the worst possible and most costly conditions; and we accompany the refusal to co-operate with others with an attitude towards potential aggressors which give them the impression that nothing will make us fight – which will mean that our power will have no deterrent effect; and that once more we may blunder and stumble into war without intending it.

Let us examine these suggestions in the light of a more detailed analysis of the Far Eastern experience.

Among those who found the British attitude in the Far Eastern crisis completely inexplicable was Mr. Stimson, the American Secretary of State (whose recent account of that crisis ought to be read by every Englishman who believes that future co-operation between the British and American democracies is indispensable to the security of either).

In his book¹ Mr. Stimson points out that not only was America prepared to co-operate with Britain and other states in resistance to Japan, but that again and again the United States took the lead in initiating policies of resistance, going far beyond League proposals. Not only (Mr. Stimson makes it clear) would

¹ *The Far Eastern Crisis*, Harpers, New York.

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

League States have had nothing to fear from the United States in measures designated to restrain Japan, but could count upon active co-operation.

He recites in his book (pages 89, 90, 91) the reasons for the American willingness to be associated with Britain and the League: America's interest in the 'open-door' policy in view of the vastness of the potential trade of China; the sacrifice of American prestige if Japan 'got away with it', and these two points:

'The future of the Far East will be very largely dominated by the future of the four hundred and fifty million people of Chinese blood. For several centuries Eastern Asia has owed its character mainly to the peaceful traditions of this great agricultural nation. If the character of China should be revolutionised and through exploitation become militaristic and aggressive not only Asia but the rest of the world must tremble (page 91).

'The immense blow to the cause of peace and war prevention throughout the world which would inevitably be caused if without protest or condemnation Japan were permitted to violate and disregard the group of post-War treaties which she had ratified and upon which so many hopes of our race and of our part of the world had been predicated (page 89).'

If this last consideration is important for the United States, what shall we say of its importance for the suzerain of India, the Protector of Australia?

Mr. Stimson goes on to sketch how he sought the co-operation of Britain, particularly in supporting the enunciation of what has since become known as 'the

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

Stimson doctrine' of non-recognition – the notification to Japan that no change brought about by military force in violation of treaties would be recognised by the other signatories to those treaties.

Whatever other effects that 'diplomatic sanction' might have had, it would have had this: to commit America to much closer general co-operation with ourselves in common resistance to aggression; to make the Kellogg Pact a political reality: to secure from the United States acquiescence in the British view of sea rights whenever naval action was invoked on behalf of treaties like the Kellogg Pact. (It should be noted, incidentally, that at that moment the President of the United States, Mr. Hoover, and the Secretary of State himself, Mr. Stimson, were both familiar with the Far East, both having lived there. Mr. Hoover had also lived in Australia, many years in England.)

Mr. Stimson explains why he had counted with so much assurance on the co-operation of Great Britain. He recalls the immense importance Britain had always attached in the past to the maintenance of the open door in China, the efforts that had culminated in the Nine-Power Treaty, and finally with what care President Hoover and the British Government had in the preceding two or three years prepared the way for making the Kellogg-Briand Pact, not merely a 'declaration of good intention', but a treaty possessing clear obligations for common action. The note to Japan was 'the most signal

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

effort' ever made by the American Government to carry that policy a stage further.

And then the British Government turned the whole thing down – coldly, curtly, refusing, in effect, further co-operation. The contents of the communiqué to the Press renouncing rejection of the American offer were such, says Mr. Stimson, 'as to be taken by most readers, including – what was most important – the Japanese Government, as a rebuff to the United States.' Japan saw immediately that Anglo-American co-operation had broken down, and began to use in justification of her aggression the very arguments which the British Government and the British Press (Mr. Stimson quotes at length from the *Times* leaders) had used concerning the American proposals. It was not surprising that the Japanese reply to the American note was conceived, as a British historian has noted, in 'a vein of elegant irony which came within an ace of insolence'. Mr. Stimson notes the effect which the general line taken by the British Government and Press had upon Japan:

'The imperialistic group of Japanese statesmen who for years had cherished the hope of a military and economic hegemony over China, but whose hopes had been suppressed by the enlightened policy at Washington in 1922, joined in by the Japanese Government of that day, could have asked for no more effective assurance in their favour (p. 104).'

But if the effect of the British note was to encourage Japan, it was equally to discourage China, though the

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

greatest factor in offsetting Japanese aggression or imperialism was to make possible the resistance of China.

Mr. Stimson notes that 'Its omissions were the most important feature of the communiqué. It was entirely silent as to the preservation of the sovereignty, independence and integrity of China, the Kellogg-Briand Pact, and the assertion of the principle of the non-recognition of the fruits of unlawful aggression. It thus ignored entirely the questions of world peace and China's integrity which we had deemed the most important features not only of our note, but of the previous three months' negotiations in which we had been supporting the efforts of the League of Nations and the British Government.' The communiqué dealt solely with the single problem of continuing trade relations with Manchuria.

Mr. Stimson quotes the *Times* leader which included the following:

'In invoking its clauses (those of the Nine-Power Treaty) the American Government may have been moved by the fear that the Japanese authorities would set up a virtually independent administration in Manchuria which would favour Japanese interests to the detriment of the commerce of other nations. It is clear that the Foreign Office does not share these apprehensions, and that, although the Nine-Power Treaty provides for consultation between the interested powers, it was not in fact consulted before the Note was communicated to Nanking and Tokyo.'

One wonders how the Foreign Office likes to be

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

reminded to-day of the fact that according to the *Times* it did not on that occasion take the view that Japan was likely to set up 'a virtually independent administration in Manchuria'.

Mr. Stimson quotes further from this leader:

'Nor does it seem to be the immediate business of the Foreign Office to defend the "administrative integrity" of China until that integrity is something more than an ideal. It did not exist in 1922 and it does not exist to-day. On no occasion since the Nine-Power Treaty was signed has the Central Government of China exercised any real administrative authority over large and varying areas of its huge territory. To-day its writ does not run in Yunnan and in other important provinces, and, while its sovereignty over Manchuria is not disputed, there is no evidence that it has exercised any real administration there since Nanking became the Chinese capital.

'The depth of the cleft between the views and policies of our two governments indicated by this assumed interpretation,' comments Mr. Stimson, 'can best be appreciated when we remember that in 1922, when Lord Balfour and Mr. Hughes at Washington were executing the Nine-Power Treaty, the chaotic conditions created by civil war in China were far greater than in September 1931, when Japan attacked and destroyed the government in Manchuria.' Nevertheless it had been the avowed intention of those statesmen, by that treaty, to assure China of ample time and freedom from foreign aggression to make successful

¹ See Report of Lytton Commission, Chapter 1.

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

her gigantic task of developing the free institutions of a self-governing state.' He adds:

'The treaty was based upon the assumption that in the long run the interests of the foreign nations trading with China would be better served by such a policy of self-denial as the treaty provided than by any selfish exploitation of China. Thus the assertions of the *Times* as to China's lack of "administrative integrity" were not only quite irrelevant to the purposes and validity of the Nine-Power Treaty; they not only ignored the fact that Japan herself was responsible for the recent adverse change in Manchuria, but they were assertions on their face most welcome to a nation which, like Japan, was then engaged in tearing down the growth which the treaty was intended to build up.'

The Secretary of State goes on:

'From the beginning of the Manchurian crisis, in considering all possible influences and sanctions which conceivably could bring back to the responsible attitude towards the outside world which in former periods her government had manifested, the sanction which I had always felt would be most potent of all would be a belief on her part that in the fundamental principles governing this problem the United States of America and the British Commonwealth of Nations would see eye to eye and stand side by side. That was a feeling which I shared not only with the members of our administration, but with most responsible Americans with whom I had discussed this matter. Moreover, it was a belief which Japan herself might well have acquired by observation of the Anglo-American co-operation throughout the negotiation of the Nine-Power Treaty itself at Washington in 1922 as well as

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

throughout the long and difficult negotiations of the London Naval Conference of 1930. The Chief evil result of these statements of the *London Times* which I have just described was that they tended to destroy at once any such belief on the part of Japan. The memory of this cleft necessarily coloured and rendered difficult whatever was attempted throughout the subsequent months.'

The protagonists of Japan were prompt to take advantage of this assurance of divided counsel which was thus offered them. Mr. Stimson points out that in the long series of their attempted defences for their Manchurian adventure during the autumn, they had not dared to argue that China's alleged lack of standing as an organised state operated to relieve them from the obligations of their covenants towards her in the Nine-Power Treaty and elsewhere. Indeed, they could hardly do so in view of the fact that on September 18, 1931, China had become a member of the Council of the League of Nations upon the motion and endorsement of Japan herself. But now with this assurance offered them they were quickly emboldened to take this position.

On January 16th the Japanese Government replied to the American note of January 7th. Not only did the tone of the note on its face give evidence of the receipt of re-enforcement to the Japanese cause, but made almost literal use of the *London Times*'s argument.

'But while it gladly accepted the argument offered by the *London Times* as to the lack of organised

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

government in China,' adds Mr. Stimson a little maliciously, 'the Japanese Government in this note decline to lend any support to the happy assurance which the *Times* had asserted was held by the Foreign Office against the fear of a future "Manchukuo", for in the note to us it at once proceeded to lay the basis of the argument upon which "Manchukuo" was immediately afterward constructed.

'The argument to the effect that China was not an organised state and that this fact relieved Japan from the obligation to carry out the covenants of the Nine-Power Treaty and the League of Nations Covenant was thereafter regularly put forward by the Japanese Government in its diplomatic utterances.'¹ It may be fairly said to have become the argument upon which Japan thereafter relied with the greatest assurance. It was ultimately rejected as untrue and unsound by the unanimous report of the Lytton Commission in September.²

Throughout the whole story of this retreat the standing argument of British Government apologists has been that it was unable to act because others refused to act with it. Indeed, until the publication of Mr. Stimson's book, the refusal of the American Government to co-operate in any action against Japan

¹ Thus it was used on February 19th by the Japanese representative in the argument before the Council of the League of Nations in defence to an application of Article Ten of the Covenant. It was again used in the reply on February 23rd on the same subject, and it was used in the formal statement of the position of the Japanese Government accompanying the foregoing reply of February 23rd.

² See Report of Lytton Commission, Chapter I.

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

and the fear that the United States might indeed embarrass such action was the classic explanation of our impotence. Since then, the refusal of the French Government has been the standing excuse. Mr. Stimson has something to say on that:

'I learned informally from the French Government that owing to the attitude of the British it would not make the demarche towards Japan which it had been previously considering, and several other powers, signatories of the Nine-Power Treaty, including the Netherlands and Belgium, later informed me that they did not consider it necessary to send a note on the situation to Japan or China. In the light of the division of opinion made clear by the British attitude, such a position on the part of smaller governments having territorial interests in the Far East was easily understood.'

There may be details here or there of Mr. Stimson's story with which the critic and the historian will disagree. But the point about it which matters is that for years it has been customary to explain the failure to organise collective action in resistance to aggression as due very largely to the absence of America, to the fact that if it came to naval action Britain would find herself in conflict with the United States.¹ Whatever else Mr. Stimson's contribution

¹ On which point, however, the position of the American Government has been made clear enough. The terms of the declaration of Mr. Norman Davis, speaking formally for his government are: 'The United States will undertake to refrain from any action and will withhold protection from its citizens if engaged in activities which would tend to defeat the collective effort which the States in consultation might have decided upon against the aggressor.' Since the date of this declaration the Abyssinian fiasco has tended to convince American opinion that collective action taken impartially in restraint of aggression is never likely to be seen in Europe.

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

may do it disposes of that legend. That our attitude encouraged the worst features of Japanese policy – the most dangerous to the British Empire – when it might have discouraged it, is, in view of the foregoing story altogether probable.

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Whether in fact we and other League states possessed the necessary power to restrain Japan we do not know. But we do know that almost certainly we did not possess the will. And in this as in the other cases dealt with here, one is obliged to ask whether the opinion that we did not possess the power was not due to the fact that we had not the will. Had Japan's attack been upon British instead of upon Chinese territory we should almost certainly have discovered that we had the power to resist her.

We urged at the time the ineffectiveness of economic sanctions. But when the aggressor was Russia we suddenly discovered great value in economic sanctions.

For years much of our public had been arguing that the danger of war comes from Russia, that she is both powerful and mischievous.

Then six British engineers are put on their trial in Moscow for sabotage. And immediately the boycott and economic pressure, which we were told could not possibly work as a sanction, suddenly became a practical and effective instrument for protest and

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

pressure, and the necessary powers were rushed through Parliament in a few hours.

What explains our difference of attitude towards sanctions in the two cases? Why do measures which looked to us quite ineffective, useless, dangerous in the one case, become suddenly useful and effective in another? (Especially when it is a very open question whether the Russian embargo did not make it more difficult for the Russian Government to do what we wanted it to do.)

When we turn from the task of saving the world's constitution – the first effort to emerge from world anarchy – to saving six British subjects from imprisonment, from suffering the verdict of a lot of Bolshies, Ah! that is very different. Here is something that we can take risks about; on behalf of which we can sacrifice British trade. Suddenly the embargo which could not possibly work in the case of Japan or Italy becomes workable and practical.

The truth is, of course, as we know in our heart of hearts, that if there had been the same will to find the means of restraining Japan and Italy that there was to restrain Moscow, the long story of these aggressions would have been very different.

The lack of will is revealed in another way. Those who constitute themselves the watchdogs of Empire were (as the Press and other opinions cited below sufficiently show) favourable to the Japanese advance in China. The British Foreign Minister himself declared that the Japanese aggressions were matters

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

that did not concern us. Many newspapers made themselves definitely the advocates of Japan, and bitterly resented all suggestions of restraint or 'interference'. Almost everywhere one heard the view expressed that in any case we were powerless to stop the Japanese advance.

Now where policy is indecisive and undeclared, as is usually British foreign policy, the action of other states, both potential allies and potential enemies, will be guided very largely in the action which they take by what appears to be the general drift of British public opinion, particularly the opinion of circles likely to influence the action of the government. This gives to Conservative and 'Imperialist' opinion great importance. The potential aggressor is apt to argue: 'If the Imperialists don't object, the others are not likely to; and if we have the government party with us the others do not much matter.'

How definitely Conservative, governmental, and some commercial opinion was favourable to Japan, the quotations below indicate. A member of the House declares, to applause: 'I am for Japan.' Eminent commercial men point out how important it is to remain on friendly terms with our 'old and trusted ally'. Sir Charles Seligman, on the occasion of the visit of the British Industrial Mission to Japan gives a statement to the Press:

'I can say that practically every thinking Briton is in favour of reviving the Anglo-Japanese alliance, not with a secret agreement to attack any third party but

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

for open and friendly mutual assistance. We had to think of the American sentiment toward it before, but the situation has changed.'¹

Lord Hailsham in a statement to the Press would seem to support Japan out of regard for the League of Nations. He says:

'It would be unwise for the British Government to take action which would separate it from other League of Nations members and identify it with the United States in any sort of opposition to other members of the League.

'Action under Article Sixteen of the Covenant would be a declaration that Britain deemed Japan had committed an act of war against other League members and that would have a serious effect in extending the scope of the present hostilities instead of limiting them.

'There has been no suggestion of complaint or criticism by the United States of any action or inaction on our part.'

The attitude of the *Times* has been indicated in the review given a few pages back of Mr. Stimson's efforts to secure British co-operation in resistance to Japanese aggression.

The Conservative Press as a whole, particularly the newspapers which had been notable as protagonists of Empire, nationalist, apprehensive of any threat to our imperial position, putting defence before all other political considerations, day after day gave assurances to the Japanese imperialists that they need fear no objection to their conduct on the part of Britain.

¹ *Manchester Guardian*, October 24, 1934.

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

Thus, in the *Sunday Times*, 'Scrutator' gives aid and comfort to Japan:

'This country is determined to incur no responsibility for the sanctions under Article Sixteen, in no circumstances to run the risk of war for the sake of Manchuria, or to allow ourselves to be diverted from our first and over-riding duty to recover for our own country its freedom from oppressive taxation, for misery of slums, the decline of international trade, and the demoralisation of enforced idleness. What is Jehol to Southwark, or Chaoyong to Salford?'

From another quarter, *Truth*, comes this:

'... There is a strong, though unexpressed, current of feeling in England in favour of forming some sort of alliance with Germany in Europe and with Japan in the Far East to keep the peace of the world against all assailants. And why not? There is a strong and general revulsion of feeling on the part of most of us in favour of post-War Germany—there has arisen a very general feeling that we get on better with the Germans than with the French, and that if ever there were to be such a calamity as another European war, Great Britain and Germany (including Austria) would be allies, not enemies. . . .'

The constant stream of encouragement which the imperialist Press gave to the Japanese conquerors may be indicated by these extracts from two typical representatives of that Press: the *Morning Post* and the *Daily Mail*. The following are characteristic extracts from the *Mail*:

November 5, 1931.

Japan's presence in Manchuria has been a benefit to the world. . . . Not for a moment would the people of this country permit an attitude of hostility towards Japan.

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

November 14, 1931.

Pacifists in this country are actually calling on the League to withdraw the Ambassadors of all the Powers from Tokyo and use financial and economic pressure, and, if that will not do, use pressure in the way of a blockade in preventing goods going into and coming out of Japan. The people of this country are not going to war with their old friend and ally, Japan, for the benefit of Chinese war-lords and Soviet incendiaries.

(Statement repeated on January 9, 1932.)

February 18, 1932.

There are fire-eating pacifists in London and Geneva who would drag Great Britain into war with Japan. They are clamouring for the application of 'sanctions' to Japan if she does not promise immediately to abandon her claims in Manchuria and to leave Shanghai. . . . In no circumstances must our British Authorities allow themselves to be manœuvred by these reckless visionaries into a great conflict.

'Keep out of Asiatic entanglements' is the golden rule for Downing Street.

Our National Government was placed in office to rescue Great Britain from bankruptcy, not to go crusading in the Far East.

February 27, 1932.

Japan's case is a very strong one. It is that China is not an organised people with a responsible government as the League of Nations assumes.

Ignoring the realities of the situation, our pacifist war-mongers are redoubling their shrieks for British intervention. They are clamouring for the British Government to carry out an 'economic boycott' or 'pacific blockade' of Japan. Their aim, they say openly, is to 'bring Japan to reason'.

Once more we must remind them that 'economic boycott' and 'pacific blockade' are impossible in the modern world without war, and of that war the brunt would have to be borne by the people of these islands.

The duty of the government is clear. It is to have nothing to do with action, whether diplomatic or 'economic' against Japan.

March 30, 1932.

(On Japan's announcement of cessation of hostilities at Shanghai.)

She (Japan) has shown great patience throughout. . . . Few Powers would have been willing to expostulate for months with the Mandarins of Nanking.

November 21, 1932.

The Japanese reply to the Lytton Report *re* Manchuria was issued last evening. It is an exceedingly able document, which will convince all reasonable people that Japan has right on her side. The essential passage in Japan's reply is that she has treaty rights and

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

vast economic interests in Manchuria, and that having a large number of her people settled there, she is vitally interested in the country.

As everyone knows she won those rights by prolonged struggle with the Russian Empire in 1904-5, and will never tamely surrender them.

It would be an outrage on humanity to bring about such a solution in order to save the face of the League of Nations. But the misguided idealists who have so openly taken side with the Chinese war-lords and communists mean to make strenuous efforts to force Great Britain into some wild scheme of economic and financial boycott of Japan which they hope would drive Japan from Manchuria.

December 10, 1932.

Japan is rendering good service to civilisation by restoring law and order in Manchuria. She means to stay there and Great Britain has not the slightest intention of turning her out.

Fortunately Sir John Simon's wise and moderate policy prevailed with the Assembly of the League of Nations.

February 6, 1933.

The attempt of the League of Nations to force Japan out of Manchuria, where she has vital interests and where she is creating order and peace, is a thoroughly mischievous one.

February 27, 1933.

Any embargo of arms to the combatants must be applied equitably to both sides. But any embargo would mean ominous interference with British industry. To impose an embargo at all would absolutely wreck our trade in the Far East.

The *Morning Post* editorial comment is in similar strain throughout. Thus:

November 9, 1931.

We have no cause of difference with Japan as long as she observes the rights of British subjects in Manchuria, and we have even reason for gratitude (as for admiration) in the strong stand she is making against anarchy, brigandage and murder. If the Chinese Republic were to establish order and good government south of the Great Wall she might then have real ground to claim non-intervention in these outlying parts of the ancient Chinese Empire. As things are, it would be both futile and inhumane to espouse her quarrel with the Power which is putting one room of her house in some sort of order.

November 16, 1931.

But even if the Japanese case were less strong than it is nothing could be more foolish than any attempt on the part of the League Council to invoke against Japan the 'economic sanctions' stipulated in Article Sixteen of the Covenant. . . . A policy which risked

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

embroiling the world for the sake of peace would be a mockery. What is at issue is something much more important than the dignity of the League of Nations.

January 26, 1932.

On this occasion the Council (of the League) if it is wise and has learned anything from the experience of recent months will refrain from again encouraging Chinese intransigence by holding out the hope of protection from the consequences of incompetent weakness.

January 30, 1932.

But to suggest that Great Britain should enter into some sort of agreement with other Powers to intervene on behalf of China seems to us fantastic. . . . We say plainly that Great Britain would never consent to be dragged into the danger of war on such an issue.

Japan, we hope, is our good friend: apart from a possible error in the weapons used, she is acting under the sort of provocation which has forced Great Britain into similar action before now.

January 30, 1932.

For our part, although we do not believe in peace at any price, we value it enough to beware of entering into superfluous danger in a doubtful cause. Japan, broadly speaking, is the only element making for order and good government in the Far East.

March 3, 1932.

Those politicians whose credit is involved in the League of Nations were ready to drive the world to war in order to vindicate the machinery of peace. To the plain man the lesson of these dire events will remain obvious: an appeal to Geneva is no satisfactory substitute for the power of self-defence.

February 21, 1933.

Yet the League which might have used the occasion to lesson the Chinese, is behaving as if they were the innocent as well as the injured parties. We do not see how this partiality is going to benefit the world at large or any British interest. Nor do we see how it is going to help the cause of peace. On the contrary the Chinese politicians have foolishly persuaded themselves that if they make war with Japan in Jehol, the League which has taken their side in the argument will also take their side in the fighting. . . . The League of Nations would best serve the interests of peace by making it clear to China, without any further delay, that there is no prospect of any such intervention.

April 24, 1934.

The intervention both in Shanghai and in Manchuria, whatever may be thought of the methods employed, were invited by China, if not forced upon Japan, through the anarchy and misrule which threatened every foreign interest.

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

Imagine a Japanese Liberal attempting to bring home to the militarist fire-eaters in his own country the dangers of Japan's course in China, the danger of meeting the condemnation of states like Great Britain – and then imagine that counsellor being confronted with the extracts from the British Press just cited.

§

Let us proceed to the next chapter of this story.

If the Far Eastern instance of retreat before a rival power and submission to its threats stood alone it would be striking. But it does not stand alone. It became a link in a chain. It set in motion forces which were destined to carry Britain along with increasing momentum into positions where her security became progressively threatened. If Manchuria, as the late Mr. Frank Simonds put it, was the preface to Abyssinia, Abyssinia was to become the preface to events even more disturbing to imperial security.

An objective and impartial observer¹ writing from Italy in 1936 on the Abyssinian crises notes:

There is no doubt that Mussolini has closely watched the overrunning of North China by Japan, the rearming of Germany, and the growth of militarism in these countries; and he was certainly deeply impressed by the far-reaching significance of the slothful behaviour of the League of Nations over the Manchurian affair in 1931. The fact is that, whilst

¹ A. H. Abbati: *Italy and the Abyssinian War*. London General Press.

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

Mussolini was ready to subscribe with all the means at his disposal to any fair system of international order, the toleration of irregularities and the absence of impartiality shown by the League have caused him to lose faith in the competence of the League in its present form to suppress the jungle law of survival, and have induced him to revert to that law. He certainly thought that if Italy did not take Abyssinia pretty soon, some other country would do so.

The last consideration provides interesting testimony of the way in which anarchy, the failure to restrain crime, makes further crime all but inevitable.

We have overwhelming testimony to the fact that from the first efforts to restrain Italy were ineffective because Italy in view of the Manchurian experience never believed that Britain (without whom they could not operate) was serious in those efforts. In August 1935, the Geneva Correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* quoted Signor Forges-Davanzati, the editor of the *Tribuna* and an Italian senator, who broadcast from Rome on the wireless to the effect that he had just returned from a visit to London, and could assure Italians that they had nothing to fear from England. Mr. Dell summarised the Senator's broadcast conclusions in these words: 'Look at the success that Japan and Germany have had by leaving the League of Nations. They have done just what they pleased. We have only to follow their example and the British Government will offer us concessions to get us back to Geneva just as it has to Hitler.'

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

The link between Manchuria and Abyssinia is more than psychological. It is strategic. The establishment of Japan upon the Asiatic continent very directly affected our defensive position in respect of China, India, Australia and the Pacific generally. The aggression of Italy, which followed, was destined to weaken our position not only on the line of communication to India and the antipodes, but as an African power generally, in our relation to the native populations. But if Italy's establishment in Abyssinia was to affect gravely our position in the Eastern Mediterranean that event was itself soon to set up others which affected our position in the Western Mediterranean, to neutralise the strategic value of Gibraltar. It did not stop there. This movement of policy was to have its repercussions nearer home upon 'the British frontier of the Rhine'.

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Let us take up the story at the point where it reaches the Mediterranean.

Even before the cutting of the Suez Canal the Mediterranean was recognised as a main artery of Empire. Our interest in the Mediterranean was established long before we had possessions there, and before it was part of our sea-route to India. The opening of the canal produced—or coincided with—a ten-fold increase in our trade with the East. It also helped to secure our world position, especially in India—since reinforcement was

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

quicker. Unlike the old route round the Cape of Good Hope, this short route ran through a narrow sea bordered by other naval powers. With the construction of the Canal it became vital, Morocco as important as Gibraltar, and Egypt indispensable to the Canal. So vital have we regarded the occupation of Egypt because of its bearing on the defence of the Canal, that for forty years we risked ill-feeling and a dangerous state of international tension in order to maintain occupation. Further, we have regarded it as indispensable to protect even the hinterland of Egypt and the Red Sea, as our retention of the Sudan proves. After all, in addition to being still the greatest Asiatic power, we are also the greatest African. In both cases a small minority of Europeans are confronted by an overwhelming native majority, a fact which raises defensive problems upon which recent events have a very direct bearing.

Our defensive policy in the Mediterranean has been described by Captain Liddell Hart as having two main objects:

- (1) To ensure the safe passage of the sea traffic to and from the East, which uses this short-cut.
- (2) To maintain our territorial position and sphere of influence in the Eastern Mediterranean (our Near Eastern interests) and the forces which safeguard it.

‘The events of the past two years have brought home

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

to us forcibly,' he adds,¹ 'the significance and dangers of the Mediterranean situation. Also, a new precariousness of our own position there, which has been increased by our own short-sight.'

He goes on to point out that the strain of maintaining the Mediterranean route became felt in the years before 1914. The growth of the German Fleet in the North Sea made it difficult for us to increase our strength there while maintaining it in the Mediterranean. We found a compromise by an arrangement with France. We concentrated our strength in the North Sea at the expense of our forces in the Mediterranean. And France vice versa.

This morally committed us, Captain Liddell Hart goes on to point out, to safeguarding the northern coasts of France against the German Navy. (An interesting example of the way in which under the pre-War system with no formal commitment we nevertheless become 'entangled' and defensive isolationism breaks down.) We only realised the full effect of that commitment in the critical days of negotiation at the end of July 1914.

Even more than our General Staff discussions, with the French, it hampered our freedom of policy.

¹ From the report of a lecture delivered April 14, 1937.

The account reports him as remarking:

'The British habit of not looking far ahead has advantages. It enables adaptability to circumstances. It is very disconcerting to foreign designs. But it is also awkward for ourselves. It draws us into many difficulties which might have been avoided. And into them, unprepared to meet them. Not only politically but militarily.'

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

The peculiar dangers of the Mediterranean – as a traffic route – were shown by the high proportion of submarine sinkings there compared to the small forces operating – rarely more than five or six at a time. One alone sank half a million tons of merchant shipping.

The effect was the more significant because of: (a) the distance the U-boats had to come, (b) the difficulties of the passage past the British Isles ‘break-water’, (c) the pooriness of the bases they could temporarily use.

That is to say, the position was dangerous when Germany was not ‘at home’ there but had to work from her geographically ‘bottled up’ position. What will the position be in the more favourable conditions which exist in the Mediterranean – that long and narrow sea – for a hostile power which *is* ‘at home’ there, and able to operate at short range from its own bases?

Our past preoccupation with the possible developments of the Italian conquest of Abyssinia was revealed the other day¹ by Mr. Lloyd George in the House of Commons:

It had been his duty during the last few weeks to look through a great many documents and letters written by very distinguished statesmen. There was a very remarkable one from Lord Milner; it was on the question whether we should give to Italy British Somaliland. Lord Milner began to point out what it

¹ March 26th, 1937.

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

meant; it was a very pathetic letter. He pointed out what the designs of Italy were, that Italy did not want British Somaliland but Abyssinia. He said, 'If she gets Abyssinia just realise what it means. She practically dominates the Soudan, she is a menace to Kenya, she is a danger to our communications to India. With that great population Italy could raise a huge army. She had begun to do it.

That was a warning almost from the tomb by a great Imperial Statesman.

One recalls positions taken by Britain in the past in these areas. When Russia threatened to occupy Constantinople a British fleet had anchored off the Golden Horn, Indian troops landed in Malta. The late Mr. Frank Simonds puts it thus:

The Ethiopian undertaking involved an invasion of a region which was at the heart of the whole British system of Imperial communications. To halt a French enterprise on the White Nile, Britain had risked war in the far-off Fashoda time. Would London show itself less determined now when Italian purpose could compromise not merely the Cape to Cairo road but also the life line of Imperial communication passing through Suez and Aden to Bombay and Sydney.

Another American writer, Richard Freund, puts other considerations thus:

Great Britain's strategic position at the eastern exit of the Mediterranean is moored at three points: the Suez Canal, the oil wells of Mesopotamia, and the Red Sea.

The Suez Canal is covered by British control of Egypt and Palestine. The oil supply is secured by the

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

British hold over the kingdom of Iraq, while Palestine protects the pipe-line to the Mediterranean. Control of the Red Sea is maintained by the naval base of Aden and friendly co-operation with Saudi Arabia.

The three focal points of British power in the Middle East form an inseparable strategic whole. If one of them is weakened the entire structure is endangered.

The Italian conquest of Abyssinia challenges them all. . . .

With the gradual development of communications and natural resources in Abyssinia, Italy will have considerable native forces at her disposal. With the growth of trade between motherland and colony, with the increase of Italian settlers, investments, and other interests, Italy will undoubtedly wish to protect Abyssinia and the trade route leading to it by military and naval forces in the Red Sea. She will thus acquire a growing interest in the very route which is Britain's highway to India, the Far East, Australia and New Zealand, and in the positions affecting its security. In other words, it is inevitable that Italy should develop aspirations to the control of Egypt, Palestine, the Arab kingdoms, the Suez Canal and the Red Sea. Italian propaganda is already busy in Egypt and Palestine.¹

The *Times*, after the event (in an editorial on June 10, 1936), sees the grave possibilities of the Italian conquest:

The situation in the Levant and the Red Sea has been transformed out of all knowledge since last autumn. Egypt, flanked already by the Italian colony

¹ Reports of unrest in the Yemen have been very current recently. An Aden correspondent says: 'If civil war should break out, which seems not unlikely, there would not only be the danger of an attack on British territory in the Aden Protectorate but possibly Italian interference, as Italy has long claimed an interest in the country.'

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

of Libya, has anxiously watched the successful aggression that has made Italy mistress of an East African empire marching for hundreds of miles with the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. The mineral wealth of her conquest, its capacity for agricultural development, its suitability for European colonisation – all these may be exaggerated; but not its military importance as a potential reservoir of 'black armies' and as a fortress flanking the sea route to India and the upper waters of the Nile.

Mr. H. N. Brailsford, as representing the other political extreme, has put (*Reynold's News*, August 25, 1935) two points:

If Abyssinia were to become part of a well-armed Italian Empire, the whole strategical outlook in this part of the world would be changed to the disadvantage of the British Empire.

With a base here for aircraft and submarines, Italy could bottle up the Suez Canal and control the Red Sea. In plain words, she would command the sea-road to India.

In vain would the British Empire hold Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Egypt and Palestine. An Italian air force, firmly based on this Abyssinian colony, could render all these historic possessions useless. The Empire would have to rely on the long, slow route round by the Cape.

To be sure Italy might be friendly. But one would have to buy her friendship, and keep on buying it. The Empire would be subject to perpetual blackmail.

Further, that blackmail would be amazingly re-enforced by another consideration.

Italy would occupy and control the region round

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

Lake Tzana and the Blue Nile. On its waters depend the whole agricultural wealth of Egypt and the Sudan. These lowlands see virtually no rain from one end of the year to the other. Their crops live on the heavy rainfall of the Abyssinian highlands.

If an unfriendly power, occupying the sources of the Nile, were by engineering works to divert it, or to lessen the volume of its water, Egypt could be starved, and the cotton plantations which British capitalists have developed in the Sudan would soon be worthless.

One need not assume that Italy would do this; it is awkward enough that she could. She would dominate Egypt by this stranglehold.

When in September of 1935 it looked for a time as though Britain was about to take the lead in preventing the Italian conquest of Abyssinia, a whole host of foreign commentators, notably American, argued, cynically it may be, but plausibly enough to this general effect:

Now at last we shall see the League do something and become a reality. For it is the obvious instrument for Britain to employ in the protection of a plain Imperial interest. She cannot afford to see a Mediterranean Power straddle the canal, a veritable life-line of empire, as on numberless occasions British Imperialists have publicly declared. For Italy to establish herself in Abyssinia, organise great black armies (as France has done) so that Abyssinia can become a base for operations against the Soudan, Egypt and Palestine, is to give away a key position, to render the command of the Mediterranean of little effect.

If the reader cares to examine the American Press of October and November of 1935 he will find

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

literally hundreds of leading articles, comments by American journalists, to that general effect. An Anglo-Italian struggle for the domination of the Mediterranean was now inevitable.

The present writer, who happened to be in America at the time, warned one or two of these commentators that in assuming Great Britain would oppose Italian aggression, using the League for the purpose, they had left out of account certain psychological factors that had never before played any considerable role in British policy; that they would shortly find the old guard of imperialism in Britain not urging opposition to Italy in her threat to the Sudan and the Canal but cheering her on, and giving her every assurance that she would never really be interfered with.

This suggestion was regarded as so fantastic by a group of American journalists in Washington to whom it was made that they immediately began to discuss what subtle device of British propaganda lay hidden in nonsense of that kind. Yet the event was not long in confirming with disastrous amplitude this prognosis.

In support of their own view they could, of course, have quoted a number of statesmen who had a special interest in and special knowledge of the African position, men like General Smuts, Sir Abe Bailey, Lord Olivier, Mr. de Water. The last named did not hesitate to say that retreat before Italy might mean the end of White civilisation in Africa. Sir Abe Bailey wrote thus:

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

If the British Commonwealth, with or without the support of the League proves powerless to preserve Abyssinia from conquest, then the British Commonwealth will have ceased to exist except in name.

Italy is now established in a country of some ten million inhabitants capable of providing native armies of at least a million men. It can become a base, a storehouse of materials. The frontiers of that country march for nearly two thousand miles with British frontiers—in Somaliland, in Kenya, in the Sudan. To any question of blockade the Italian Dictator will in a few years be able to retort:

My troops now stand on two thousand miles of British frontier. They can reach the back door of the Suez Canal. If the Canal is closed to me, it is equally closed to you. I occupy inside lines and can threaten British territory at my choice and my initiative on a two-thousand-mile front.

And Italy occupies that position in part at least as I shall show as the result of direct encouragement from British imperialists and the assurance from the British Government which plainly implied that she would not seriously be interfered with.

§

Before examining how Britain has managed to land herself in that position let us consider a caveat which the reader may here, as at other points of this story, interject. 'It is all very well thus to advance,' he may object, 'the British strategic needs. But what of the Italian strategic position to say nothing of Italian

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

economic needs? Is she not as much entitled as Britain to secure those things for herself?’

Now that would be a perfectly sound objection if the alternatives were either for Britain to place Italy at the former's mercy, or vice versa. But that has not been the alternative in these retreats. It was open to Britain to secure her own imperial defence by making the collective system a reality (the French attitude will be considered presently) and in so doing provide Italy with the same securities by which Britain herself was ready to abide; by saying to Italy: ‘We will build up a certain code of rights, political and economic, defended by the common power of Europe. If in fact you are threatened by Abyssinia we will restrain Abyssinia. We will defend Abyssinia only so long as she keeps the bargains she has entered into with you. She is ready to bring the whole case to the League and would accept from the League certain controls internally that she will not accept from you. Will you bring your case to the League?’

Which is precisely what Italy would not do. For Italy had seen the collective system collapse utterly in the case of the Manchurian affair; had witnessed Britain's indifference to it; the casual repudiation of it even by the British foreign minister, had indeed received what amounted to an assurance that his African adventure would not be seriously interfered with. He felt, as an observer already quoted has remarked, that if he did not grab Abyssinia someone else would – since the aggressor would not in fact be

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

restrained. Mussolini did not want merely economic access and security, he wanted, if he could get it reasonably cheaply, empire, conquests, glory, the wiping out of Adowa, war.

That fact has once and for all been cleared up by Mussolini's own avowals and those of his agents which he has sanctioned. Marshal de Bono in his book¹ to which Mussolini has written an approving preface, publishes one among many revealing communications from Mussolini which disposes of the whole question of aggression. (Note particularly the dates.)

De Bono writes:

'On December 30, 1934, the Head of the Government had personally compiled the "directions and plan of action for the settlement of the Italo-Abyssinian question". This most secret document, of which only five copies were made, is a model of clearness of vision and intentions and the consequent instructions.

'On January 27th and February 13th I sent two confidential letters to the Duce giving him my own impressions. With regard to the policy of the Negus I wrote, "I do not think that the Negus Neghesti will attack us, because he orders too many prayers and fasts."

'The Chief replied on February 26th. . . . Regarding the political situation he said, "Both from indications and actual interceptions it does not seem probable that the Negus wishes to take the initiative and attack."

'The Duce's letter continued, "As the Negus has not any intention of attacking us we must take the

¹ *Anno. XIII: The Conquest of an Empire*, by Emilio de Bono. With an Introduction by Benito Mussolini. Cresset Press.

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

initiative ourselves. This cannot be done unless in addition to the native troops you have, towards the end of September, at least 100,000 white soldiers, rapidly to be increased to 200,000. I mean to send you 200,000 men within the year.”¹

A review of this book by the *Times* military correspondent indicates the degree and character of revelation. The following passages may be cited:

‘It tells, with documentary reinforcement, how he planned for and prepared that war from 1932 onwards under Signor Mussolini’s direction. It shows that the Abyssinians gave Italy no real excuse for war beyond the existence of their country as a geographical block separating two Italian colonies and cramping their expansion. It reveals that the Abyssinians were found to be so anxious to avoid war that in the end the Italians had to force it on them. By these compound admissions Marshal de Bono’s book makes British apologists for Italy’s action look peculiarly silly. It

¹ Compare the terms of this private communication complaining that the Negus simply refused to take an aggressive attitude with the terms of Italy’s statement at Geneva, which were as follows:

‘Italy’s measures of legitimate defence have been provoked by the increasingly threatening attitude of Ethiopia. Italy remained in the positions she had taken up in her territory until the moment when the general mobilisation order issued by the Negus gave final proof of the imminent peril of Ethiopia’s intentions. The aggressive character of that mobilisation and the aims which it has in view have been openly avowed and proclaimed.’

And again (Session of October 10, 1935): ‘No longer able to rely upon the assistance of the League to guarantee her security and the recognition of her rights, Italy has been forced, by the League’s failure to act, to trust solely to her own resources to ward off a danger which was becoming continually greater and more imminent. . . . The aggressive attitude which Ethiopia had unceasingly maintained had now become an immediate danger, obliging Italy to adopt adequate measures of a military character.’

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

also makes the case put up by Italy's spokesmen at Geneva, and by Italian propaganda in general, look thoroughly, if less peculiarly, deceitful. But it does inspire a respect for the candour of Marshal de Bono, and of Signor Mussolini, who sponsors the book, compared with those statesmen and generals who pay lip-service to a morality which they do not observe, and who continue to falsify history long after the practical "need" for the concealment and abuse of truth has passed. . . .

'Having no thought of any ideal beyond the aggrandisement of Italy and an outlet for his energies he was able to create the opportunity of fulfilling his dream by preparing war against Abyssinia – if it was less fortunate for those who had to pay the price of such dreams. In 1932 he was sent out by Mussolini to reconnoitre the situation; after he came back he secured Mussolini's promise that he should be given "the honour of conducting the campaign". He adds that "the Duce was definitely of opinion that the matter would have to be settled no later than 1936 and told me as much". From 1933 onwards detailed estimates of the force required were worked out. At the same time, he tells us, Italian agents were being active in sowing the seeds of internal dissension in Abyssinia, and watering them with plenty of money. "Incivility" was occasionally shown to Italians travelling there, but when these incidents were followed by a "peremptory demand for satisfaction" it was always obtained.'

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

Let us look very briefly at the course of the dispute and our part in it.

On December 5, 1934, the newspapers told us that an outlying Italian post at Wal-Wal had been attacked by Abyssinian troops, who were driven off with heavy casualties on both sides. The boundary between Abyssinia and Italian Somaliland had never been demarcated; but the Ethiopian Government claimed that Wal-Wal was sixty miles within their frontier, and this was supported by Italian maps issued under the auspices of the Ministry for the Colonies. The Emperor at once protested to the Italian Government and asked for arbitration under the 1928 treaty. The Italian Government replied, accusing the Abyssinians of aggression and demanding an abject apology, including a salute to the Italian Flag at Wal-Wal and £20,000 compensation. Arbitration was refused. A week later the Emperor protested at Geneva with a full statement and offering reparations if Ethiopia's responsibility was proved. Italy again refused arbitration, and her troops continued to advance after being heavily reinforced.

On January 3, 1935, Abyssinia invoked Article Eleven of the Covenant. Almost on the same day M. Laval was concluding with Signor Mussolini an agreement by which, in return for Italy moving her troops from the French frontier and forgoing all claims to Tunis, and in final settlement of Italian claims under the London Treaty of 1915, he ceded to Italy part of French Somaliland, which controls the

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, and agreed that France would allow Italy a free hand to develop her interests in Abyssinia. That agreement went far to make Anglo-French co-operation for the restraint of Italy impossible.

But we shall get no true picture of the course of British foreign policy unless we inquire what had prompted Laval to take that course.

For fifteen years Britain had boggled at giving to France any unequivocal guarantee against German attack. At the time of the Armistice Foch had urged the separation of Rhineland, its virtual military occupation indefinitely. Wilson and Lloyd George would have none of it and offered as an alternative an Anglo-American guarantee of French territory. In consideration of this promise, France surrendered the Rhineland project. But the Anglo-American promise was not kept. First America and then Britain went back on it. At great labour the Treaty of Mutual Assistance was drawn up and France induced to accept it as a substitute. The British Government then repudiated that as well, by refusal to ratify it. The Labour Government then drew up the 1924 Protocol which France welcomed as furnishing the guarantees she needed. But a change of government taking place shortly after, the Protocol also was repudiated. There followed the Locarno group of treaties, which had the very great merit under Briand-Stresemann influence of tending to bring France and Germany into co-operation.

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

But as soon as the Locarno Treaties were signed there began to set in that rot at the moral foundations which has made British diplomacy so often a byword.

The government went on proclaiming that of course it stood firmly by the Locarno obligations. But Conservative newspapers began to disparage it, members of the rank and file of the Conservative Party openly to condemn it; eminent publicists to explain that it did not really commit us to anything. Mean-time Germany became increasingly popular, France increasingly unpopular.¹ The Hitlerite régime, to so

¹ A recent book, *I Speak of Germany*, by Norman Hillson (Routledge) is indicative of the tendency. The author contrasts (page 115) 'the obvious spirit of self-respect and national pride which sat upon all in Germany' with the attitude of the typical Frenchman 'just waiting an opportunity to add up the Britisher's bill on the wrong side' (page 223). Until recently one found that sort of thing scattered throughout much of the British Press.

Thus the *Daily Express*:

'The British nation is not going to get at odds with the Germans for the sake of the French, who want to maintain their military domination of Europe.

'This attitude on the part of the public is not due to any love for the Germans. It springs from a fixed intention to preserve "peace in our time", so far as we are concerned.

'We will not fight again in a European cause. The future of Alsace-Lorraine makes no difference to us now and henceforth.'

And *Truth*:

'The Locarno Pact is not worth the paper it is written on. There is no more chance of Great Britain taking sides against Germany at this moment than of her making war on Japan. On the contrary, there is a strong, though unexpressed, current of feeling in England in favour of forming some sort of alliance with Germany in Europe and with Japan in the Far East to keep the peace of the world against all assailants. And why not? There is a strong and general revulsion of feeling on the part of most of us in favour of post-War Germany - there has arisen a very general feeling that we get on better with the Germans than with the French, and that if ever there were to be such a calamity as another European war, Great Britain and Germany (including Austria) would be allies, not enemies. . . .'

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

many Frenchmen a nightmare, was warmly welcomed by a very important section of the British Press which began openly to urge something like an alliance with Germany.

And then came the Anglo-Naval Agreement, made, not as the result of any previous understanding with France, but as a purely bilateral agreement between Germany and Britain, an agreement by which Britain secured the limitation of German power at sea (the sphere in which Britain was particularly interested) but did nothing to secure France against the indefinite increase of German land-power.

It was all but inevitable in those circumstances that M. Laval should come to the agreement he did with Signor Mussolini.

We have now at long last recognised the need of definite commitment to defend France against unprovoked attack by Germany. Had we been ready fifteen years ago to do what finally we have been obliged to do, the whole story would have been different. The Laval-Mussolini agreement illustrates once more that if collective defence is to work at all it must not be hamstrung by partial or geographical agreements which are in conflict with its fundamental principle that an attack on one is an attack on all. If you are pledged to the support of the law, you cannot be pledged to the support of those who break it.

When it became quite clear in 1934 that Italy had made up her mind to invade and conquer Abyssinia the latter appealed to the League. It was to the

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

obvious interest of Britain to keep the principle of collective defence in the forefront as the instrument by which Italy should if possible be restrained. But far from using our influence to keep the matter in the hands of the League, we used our influence to keep it out of the League.

Abyssinia offered arbitration on all issues; she undertook beforehand to accept any decision of the League Council; she begged that neutral observers should be sent by the League to the spot (where the frontier questions had been raised), and offered to pay for them; she urged the League (i.e., the Great Powers) to put a stop to the grave danger of war; she even offered to cede a part of her territory and give Italy an economic sphere of influence for the sake of peace.

Mussolini rejected arbitration on all but a minor issue, and then only on his own terms; he refused to recognise the League's authority to take up the dispute at all; he spurned the Abyssinian offers with contempt, announced publicly his intention to wage a war of conquest. The powers yielded the League authority virtually all along the line. Mr. Lloyd George (reported in the *News Chronicle* August 14th) comments:

'Negotiations are going on in Paris to try and avert a war. The whole object of the Covenant of the League was to prevent wars in future between nations. We set up at enormous expense an elaborate organisation at Geneva, representing almost all the nations of the

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

world, for that purpose, and one of the conditions of the negotiations at the moment is that the very body which has been set up to try and substitute methods of conciliation for methods of bloodshed should not be called in at all. Signor Mussolini said: "If the League of Nations is brought in, I do not appear." They had accepted that, and immediately that was accepted they wiped the League out as an authority on peace and war.

'The very country whose integrity and independence have been challenged has been ruled out from a conference that is discussing its very existence as an independent state. . . . What are they discussing? Are they discussing how they are to prevent Signor Mussolini from destroying the independence of a friendly power which is a Member of the League? Not at all. They are just discussing what measure of economic and strategic and political control can be given to Italy without war. How they can deliver Abyssinia on the cheap to Italy—that is the question which is being discussed.'

But we did something more, something which at this date seems completely incredible in its fatuousness and injustice. At Italy's request we imposed an embargo upon the export of arms to Abyssinia. Thus, at a time when Italy was feverishly pouring armies into Africa for the purpose of conquering Abyssinia, we showed our 'impartiality' by applying an embargo 'to both parties', an embargo which, while it did not even embarrass Italy, made it impossible for Abyssinia to acquire the means of defence.

The Italian demand that we should refuse licences for the export of arms to Abyssinia happened to be a breach of our obligation in the 1930 arms traffic treaty

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

with Abyssinia to allow the Abyssinian Emperor to supply himself with the arms he needed in self-defence. Italy manufactures her own munitions and Abyssinia does not possess a single munitions factory. The argument was that by denying Abyssinia arms 'conciliation' was more likely to succeed.

What answer could be given to the Note of August 14th from the Abyssinian Government to the League?

The Royal Italian Government is continuing to send troops and ammunition to East Africa. It is ceaselessly manufacturing arms and implements of war, with the openly avowed intention of using them against the Ethiopian Empire. There is no manufacture in Ethiopia, either public or private, of arms and munitions of war. The Imperial Ethiopian Government to-day finds it absolutely impossible to obtain means of defence outside its own frontiers. Wherever it attempts to obtain them it meets with prohibitions and export embargoes.

Is that real neutrality? Is it just? Will the Council remain unmoved in face of this situation, which is steadily growing worse? Will it allow this unequal contest to continue between two members of the League of Nations, one of which is all-powerful, is in a position to employ, and has declared that it is employing, all its resources in preparing for aggression, while the other, weak and pacific and mindful of its international obligations, is deprived of the means of organising the defence of its territory and very existence, both of which are precious to it? Will the Council assume responsibility in the eyes of the world for allowing preparations to continue unchecked for the massacre of a people who constitute a menace to none?

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

And then we proceeded to do something more, a crowning imbecility – if our purpose was the restraint of Mussolini. The spokesmen of the British Government announced with pride that whatever else it did it would take no course in the matter of sanctions which might provoke war with Italy. From that moment the conversation might just as well have ceased. Italy had only to say that in the event of any specified sanction being employed she would fight, for that sanction to go into the ‘inapplicable’ list. An eminent Italian professor has pointed out that from the moment the British Cabinet announced ‘it would be no party to a policy involving war’ the real chairmanship of the Sanctions Committee passed to Signor Mussolini.

‘He has only to indicate that if such and such a sanction is applied he will fight for that particular sanction to become automatically inapplicable if the condition laid down by the British Government is to be observed.’

Mr. Winston Churchill has summarised the position thus: ‘First the Prime Minister had declared that sanctions meant war; secondly he was resolved that there must be no war; and thirdly, he decided upon sanctions.’

That this indeed was the British policy has been retrospectively confirmed by such subsequent declarations as that of Sir John Simon that he was ‘not prepared to risk a single warship on behalf of Abyssinia’. (No one of course was asking us to risk anything for

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

Abyssinia but for a law, a principle of collective defence the establishment of which happens to be indispensable to the security of the British Empire.)

The reader has only to put together the three or four points above enumerated (to say nothing of others) to see where our policy inevitably led. We did these things:

(1) Compelled as far as possible Abyssinia to treat with Italy direct instead of bringing Italy before the League.

(2) Placed at an early stage of the dispute an embargo upon arms which was absolutely crippling to the defence of Abyssinia but did not in the least embarrass Italy.

(3) Made it plain that we should never go to the extent of military action against Italy if she should announce that a given sanction 'meant war'.

There is one supreme piece of evidence which settles the last point. In M. Laval's account of his meeting with Sir Samuel Hoare and Mr. Eden on September 10, 1935, occurs this statement:

'We agreed that hostilities were about to begin almost immediately and . . . we found ourselves instantaneously in agreement upon ruling out military measures, not adopting any measure of naval blockade, never contemplating the closure of the Suez Canal—in a word ruling out everything that might lead to war.'

There are a good many in Britain who do not yet realise that this amounts to an avowal that we never meant to defend the collective system or to enforce sanctions; that the armaments which we immediately

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

proceeded to build up can never become the instrument of such a system if our attitude in future is to be what it was in the Abyssinian affair – an attitude which in ruling out war means indeed that arms are not a legitimate instrument of the collective system.

Mr. Churchill, who has examined the internal evidence as to whether our sanctions policy was 'real or sham', writes that from first to last the committee charged with devising sanctions 'conformed docilely to the limitations prescribed by the aggressor. They proceeded to the rescue of Abyssinia on the basis that nothing must be done to hamper the invading Italian armies.'

Mr. Churchill gives some instances:

'We all know how important aluminium is for war purposes. The export of aluminium into Italy was strictly forbidden by the League of Nations. But aluminium is almost the only metal that Italy produces in quantities beyond her own needs.

'The importation of scrap-iron and iron-ore into Italy was sternly vetoed, in the name of public justice. But the Italian metallurgical industry makes but little use of these, and as steel billets and pig-iron were not interfered with Italy suffered no hindrance. It would be easy to multiply these examples.

'Thus the sanctions which we have been pressing with so great a parade were not real sanctions to paralyse the invader, but merely such half-hearted sanctions as the invader would tolerate, because in fact they stimulated Italian war spirit.

'It is true that included in the sanctions were many measures, especially financial measures, which in the long run would have destroyed the Italian financial

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

power to purchase necessities in foreign countries, and that these would have eventually affected their war-making capacity.

'But the chief of these, the financial sanctions, did not require Geneva to impose them. The credit of Italy had already fallen, and was bound to fall, so low that the ordinary market factors would have been as valid as the League decision.

We know now from De Bono's avowal that the oil sanction would have made the prosecution of the war all but impossible. Mr. Churchill goes on:

'It is therefore not true to say that economic sanctions have failed. It was the will power to enforce them in a real and biting manner which failed.

'It failed because of the mental reservation of the principal powers concerned that nothing must be done which would provoke a war.

'If economic sanctions had been imposed with ruthless vigour from the outset, they would have crippled the invading armies. But before this happened Signor Mussolini would have attacked the British Fleet, or let it be known that he would, and therefore, as war was not to be contemplated, it was not possible to press them in an effective manner.'

His conclusion should be quoted:

'There is no reason to despair of collective action against the aggressor. If a sufficient number of powerfully armed nations were ready to enforce economic sanctions, the aggressor would in many cases have to submit or attack the combination.'

In this crisis as in the previous ones a large part

¹ From an article in the *Evening Standard*.

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

of the trouble arose not from malice or bad intention or even a bad policy but from misunderstanding and confusion, and the fact of having no policy at all which that confusion generates. Particularly was policy throughout bedevilled by one major confusion, embodied in the slogan emblazoned daily by a large part of the British Press that 'Sanctions mean war'.

With as much truth the Press could, of course, have proclaimed that 'defence means war'. If Italy had invaded Kenya we should immediately have provoked a state of war by defending Kenya, fighting Italy. But as Italy knew this, she did not invade British territory. Had Italy believed that Britain would defend the Covenant in the same way that we would defend territory, the international sanction would no more have meant war than the national sanction means war. There would have been no Abyssinian War. As it was, the poison gas by means of which mainly Italy placed herself in a position to threaten the canal was carried through that canal, duly declared to the authorities; the main guardian of the canal, Britain, facilitated its conveyance to the Italian armies.

Imagine this taking place if Italy had been invading Kenya or even Egypt. It indicates two measures. In the defence of British territory we are serious, we mean business and the aggressor knows that because we have the will we shall have the power. Even Mr. Garvin warned Mussolini that an attack upon

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

British territory would make Britain fight. So territory was not attacked. The defence of territory, even though it be of the Seychelles Islands, is a 'direct interest', on behalf of which we will go to war. The defence of the Covenant is in an entirely different category. It is less important than the Seychelles. Its defence is not an interest comparable with our interest in territory. But if we do not believe that its defence is comparable in importance with the defence of the tiniest British outpost, how can we be said to believe in it at all, and to be guiding our policy thereby as our government is perpetually proclaiming?

Our whole attitude means this: We will fight to defend our 'direct interests', to defend our view of our rights when they conflict with the views of another nation; we will arm as a litigant; we will not help to arm the law. So long as we favour the arming of the litigants and oppose the arming of the law we make the law impossible. And when we proclaim, as we did during the Abyssinian dispute, that we will take no action which might compel us to use our armaments in defence of the collective system, how can we argue that the purpose of our armaments is to defend the collective system?

The moral of the whole episode is that we do not believe the collective method, the method of the Covenant to be the true method of defence at all. So long as that is our belief it cannot possibly succeed.

What its sacrifice may mean to the British Empire one Canadian editor of great distinction has made

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

clear. Just before sanctions were dropped the *Winnipeg Free Press* (June 12, 1936) published an editorial which included these passages:

'It is an ironic circumstance that while the scuttlers and defeatists in England are making great play with General Smuts's statements made in an address in London twenty months ago, that the League, if it undertook to enforce the Covenant by anything more than moral suasion, would become "an international War Office", the general himself, faced with an actual and not a hypothetical situation, has seen with courage and clearness that in the challenge which Mussolini has given the League the future of world peace is at stake.

'If the League is killed by the refusal of the British nations to give it the leadership that might save it, it will be the victim of a very cynical campaign. The correspondence columns of the *Times* have been overloaded for weeks with letters from noble lords, ex-diplomats, retired proconsuls and generals, etc., expressing their "horror and amaze" at the discovery that adherence to the League meant obligations and commitments that might lead to a war in defence of the Covenant. The League, they cry out with one voice, is a potential cause of war; therefore "let's get out of it". In Canada the same appeal is made by the isolationists and also by the Imperialists.

'It can be assumed, we think, that the Imperialists and the Pacifists in Great Britain, the Imperialists and isolationists in Canada are going to have their way. The League is to disappear, and Great Britain and Canada will be free from the terrifying commitments. What then? Mr. Bennett has told us what in his opinion follows for Canada. "The task of the British Commonwealth," in preserving liberty and securing peace, must now "be taken up where the League of

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

Nations laid it down." That is to say, the commitments which could not be faced by the British nations in company with forty other countries are now to be gaily assumed by the British nations alone.'

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The prediction that British Imperialists would praise Italy and egg her on, was duly fulfilled. If the armies operating in Abyssinia had been British armies engaged in some indispensable task of imperial defence, their victories could not have been welcomed with greater enthusiasm than that expressed by, say Mr. J. L. Garvin and a number of lesser journalistic lights scattered throughout the Rothermere Press. Just as this new school of Imperialists had explained in the case of the Far Eastern crisis that we had to recede before Japan in the East because we and all our allies—America, Russia, China—were outmatched, so now it was explained that we were quite powerless even though we could count upon French ports and the economic co-operation of fifty nations, to meet Italy.

Not merely were the *Morning Post*, the *Observer*, the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express* daily assuring Mussolini that he could defy Britain without fear, he was getting that assurance from men like Lord Hardinge, former Viceroy of India and permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who wrote to the *Times* that 'nothing could be more ill-advised than for Britain to encourage the idea' of any

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

restraint of Italy; that 'in the present crisis there is no danger to the security of even a British possession'; that to support the Covenant would mean moral and material suicide.

The *Daily Express* was naturally 'doing its stuff' editorially:

'Britain has no part in the quarrel and should undertake none. Least of all should she embark on any action which would endanger the present friendly relations which exist between Rome and London. . . .

'The black Emperor charges Mussolini with the armed occupation of Abyssinian territory, and with deliberately preventing impartial arbitration of the dispute. He demands that the League enforce the Covenant.

'If that is done, depend upon it, the Italians will leave the League.'

Selections taken during the course of a year from the editorial columns of the *Daily Mail* give us the following:

'Notwithstanding the foolish talk of a few British pacifists, sympathy here is overwhelmingly with Italy. It would be wholly unjustifiable for us, with our vast Empire, to place barriers in the way of her expansion. With her fast-growing population she needs outlets. A dog-in-the-manger attitude on our part would be deplorable, seeing that Italy was a much-valued ally in the War and that she has rendered since, and is still rendering, great services to civilisation.'

June 7, 1935.

Great Britain has everything to gain from the establishment of order and security in Ethiopia in place of the present chaotic conditions.

July 15, 1935.

The British public take no interest whatever in the slave-owning Abyssinian Empire. And in this war, which now seems inevitable, their sympathy is wholly with the cause of the white races, which Italy is so firmly upholding.

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

July 25, 1935.

The League has become a continuous danger to peace. Its powerlessness for good is generally recognised outside the ranks of pugnacious pacifists.

This country ought to have a free and independent foreign policy, seeking British interests and setting the welfare of the Empire first. This we shall not have as long as we remain a member of the League.

August 5, 1935.

The only thing for Britain to do is to get out of Geneva or we shall be manœuvred into war overnight.

September 26, 1935.

War following the application of sanctions would divide Empire opinion seriously and produce such discontent among large sections of the populations of the Dominions as to aggravate all the difficulties oversea.

October 23, 1935.

After Sir Samuel Hoare's speech of October 22nd two points have emerged: (1) The British Government are determined not to take any isolated action against Italy; (2) Military sanctions are out of the question for the present.

If we stick to the Empire and leave the League to its confused debates and its 'procedurism' we shall at least be free from minor entanglements in European disputes, which concern us very slightly or not at all.

October 25, 1935.

In the boycott against Italian goods Great Britain will punish her own people more than she punishes Italy.

October 28, 1935.

The right policy to arouse enthusiasm for the government at the forthcoming election is one of immediate, large-scale rearmament to secure the welfare and prosperity of the Empire.

December 5, 1935.

It is good news that the British capital ships, *Hood* and *Reunion* with four destroyers are leaving the Mediterranean. The cruise of the six ships in the Atlantic is not a recall of them from Mediterranean waters. But it is a move in the right direction.

December 14, 1935.

No Minister ever undertook to fight for the League of Nations alone. On the contrary they insisted one and all that any action taken must be collective. There is now not the slightest possibility of such action, and it is greatly to Mr. Baldwin's credit that he has recognised that fact.

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

December 17, 1935.

This country owes a real debt of gratitude to Sir Samuel Hoare, who is just now being so savagely attacked in various quarters. Great Britain was in peril of being left to meet Italian attack single-handed, owing to the failure of the minor states to take risks if drastic sanctions precipitated a conflict.

December 18, 1935.

It is immensely to the credit of Mr. Baldwin and of his Foreign Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, to have shown themselves courageous realists at a juncture when the peace of Europe and the safety of the Empire are trembling in the balance.

December 20, 1935.

The screaming sanctionists have brought Sir Samuel Hoare down, but in the words of Sir Austen Chamberlain his speech of December 19th was not the least of the services he has rendered to his country. . . . It is welcome news that the perilous oil sanctions have been indefinitely postponed. . . . The government itself ought to have resigned instead of making Sir Samuel Hoare its scapegoat.

January 13, 1936.

It is imperative that British policy should be: 'No more sanctions.'

January 24, 1936.

Mr. Eden is trouble-maker in ordinary to Europe, always ready with reckless indictments of other nations.

His policy might be described as Defiance, not Defence, for while he is imitating foreign administrations by his attitude, British defences are in a condition of dangerous weakness.

February 3, 1936.

When is the policy of imitating Italy sponsored by dangerous Mr. Eden at Geneva going to be dropped? When is the conduct of our foreign policy going to return to sanity?

May 8, 1936.

The nation owes a debt of gratitude to Sir Austen Chamberlain for his outspoken condemnation of sanctions. His whole speech in the foreign affairs debate was a triumph of honesty and enlightenment.

May 9, 1936.

There is nothing more to be done by the League except to bury sanctions with all possible speed at its meeting on Monday.

No irreparable damage will have been done to Great Britain if her government acts with quick decision in recovering friendship with Italy.

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

June 19, 1936.

(After the abandonment of sanctions.)

The *Daily Mail* has from the first maintained that the sanctions policy was stupid and disastrous.

We welcome Mr. Eden's statement that, after the experiences of the past year, the government intends to maintain in the Mediterranean a defensive position stronger than in the past. When sanctions are buried the League of Nations will disappear in odium and obloquy. And will anyone be one farthing the worse?

June 24, 1936.

During the debate on the abandonment of sanctions Sir John Simon said: 'With grave dangers surrounding us nearer home, I am not prepared to see a single ship sunk, even in a successful naval battle, in the cause of Abyssinia.'

That in a nutshell is the case against any more dangerous meddling in a dispute which has never concerned this country. There can be no convincing reply to it.

That the *Morning Post* was taking an identical line, is shown by the following comments:

July 8, 1935.

The British Government in particular would only break its fingers were it to attempt to thrust them any further between the Italian bark and the Abyssinian tree. . . .

As for the League of Nations they are its worst friends who desire it to intervene in a quarrel which it cannot compose. . . . We should hardly think it necessary to argue the case against 'sanctions' were it not that certain foolish people are still hinting at their application. . . . Sanctions and disarmament are bats which lodge in the same belfry.

September 27, 1935.

Let us in particular remember that there is no fundamental cause of quarrel with Italy, and that if the League of Nations had not existed, or if Ethiopia had not become a member of that not very exclusive club, this matter would not now be sharply dividing us.

October 5, 1935.

Normally speaking the European should welcome the spread over Africa of his higher civilisation. . . . What complicates the situation are the engagements entered into under the Covenant of the League of Nations, to which Ethiopia was rashly admitted. We have always seen grave dangers in an attempt to substitute juridical obligations for that national interest which should guide national policy. In this case it threatens a clash between these obligations to the League and our national interest in the friendship of Italy and the peace of Europe. Great Britain rightly desires to uphold

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

the sanctity of her engagements, yet there is something repugnant to common sense and indeed to sanity in making vows of peace the occasion of strife.

February 17, 1936.

Now surely is the time for conciliation. Italy disposes of 2,000,000 bayonets which should be used to preserve the peace of Europe: so let us take heed lest we force her to use them to disturb it.

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But there is one aspect of this story which bears upon the future effectiveness of sea-power and our relations with America which seems to have been strangely neglected and which on a long view may concern the future security of the Empire quite as much as do the strategical considerations I have touched upon. Once more it concerns an offer of American co-operation, which was once more, in fact, rejected.

A large part of the value of sea-power resides in the fact that command of the sea enables a nation to secure outside resources for itself and deny them to the enemy. In the exercise of that function, however, the British Navy has again and again been brought into conflict with America. The conflict has resulted in one war with America and brought us near to several more: Naval parity with America has not made this 'freedom of the seas' claim, maintained ever since America became an independent state as a sort of political religion, of less importance. When in September of 1935 it looked as though Britain and the League meant business, the President and Secretary Hull interpreted the Neutrality Act (which

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

had only a few months' validity) in this way: Supplies on the peace-time scale could be sent to both belligerents, *but at the trader's risk*. Now, in notifying American citizens that they did trade with belligerents at their own risk, the President was doing three things: (1) acting in line with public feeling in America, which did not desire once more to see vast war trades established which would end by embroiling America in the dispute; (2) throwing over the whole of the 'freedom of the seas' doctrine; and (3) making America the economic ally of Britain and the League.

For note the effect of this new line of policy. Assume that Britain, acting on behalf of the League, had blockaded Italy. American shippers would under the ruling just quoted be free to send normal peace-time shipments to fifty nations, which those nations, presumably, would be free to distribute among themselves as they pleased. Consignments to Italy would be stopped by the blockading powers, but the American Government would be unconcerned. It would be 'trader's risk' trade. So long as the League Powers commanded the sea, they would be able to draw upon the resources of America, and the blockaded state would not. The effect of that interpretation of the Neutrality Act was to concede practically every point for which Britain in the past had contended, and to make British sea law world law. The American 'rights', maintained sometimes at such bloody cost for a century and a half, were suddenly surrendered on

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

behalf of world action against aggression. What British power had not been able to do during a century and a half, the American Congress did suddenly of its own free will, when it seemed likely that the effect of such reading of neutrality would be to check aggression, and not merely promote some private interest of Britain.

Here, surely, was a heaven-sent opportunity to make British sea law world law. And once more the offer, or the opportunity, was rejected. It soon became apparent that there was no intention of restraining aggression by blockade or otherwise; the United States shared the disillusionment that came with the Hoare-Laval proposals; the offer has lapsed, and no man can tell what character future neutrality legislation in the United States will take.

Thus, in the retreat before Japan we had sacrificed the opportunity of positive co-operation amounting to alliance with America; in the retreat before Italy we sacrificed the chance of coming at long last to agreement with America on the one point which has been a cause of division between us, of putting our sea-power in a position for which we have struggled for 150 years to place it.

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But if it be true that Manchuria was the preface to Abyssinia, Abyssinia became the preface to movements against the strategic security of Britain even nearer home than the Mediterranean. Not un-

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

naturally. If success in one attempt gives rise to a second attempt, two successes are still more likely to give rise to a third attempt.

For many years the Prime Minister of Great Britain had proclaimed as a sort of defensive slogan that our frontier was the Rhine; a frontier indispensable to the security of France whose defence we recognise as indispensable to our own. Agreement was embodied in elaborate treaties freely entered into by Germany and reaffirmed in most categorical terms by Hitler himself. But the Duce had made it clear that you could tear up treaties and secure a free hand with complete impunity. Should the German Führer show less resolution than the non-Nordic Italian Duce?

'Britain's frontier is the Rhine?' Very well. The Führer will cross that frontier, and we will see. This frontier is crossed in violation of undertakings freely given to us, and immediately we indicate to France that – well, our frontier is no longer the Rhine. (She had always doubted just how we interpreted that slogan, and her doubts, as we have seen, explained her hesitations in the Italo-Abyssinian matter.)

Our imperialists having applauded the retreat before Japan and disparaged American co-operation in resistance to her, having applauded the retreat before Italy and the failure to secure the British position in sea-rights by taking up the American offer in that connection, applauded loudest of all when Germany crossed our frontier – what we had declared to be our frontier.

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

Sections of the Liberal Press even joined in the applause on the general ground that Germany was merely 'going into her own house'. A few Conservatives (of whom Sir Austen Chamberlain was one) took the line (in common with the majority of French opinion) that this particular break of solemn undertaking (for here was no 'dictated agreement' but a treaty freely entered into by Germany and ratified by Hitler himself) was even more serious than Italy's treaty breaking in the matter of Abyssinia and the employment of poison gas.

The incident need not detain us except to remind ourselves that here was one more scrap of paper, one more proof that the failure of law at one point is apt to weaken it at all points; that it was one further acceleration of the slip down the slope to chaos, and was destined to bring about what yet may well prove the most sinister lawlessness of all: that in Spain.

The Rhineland *coup* was marked by the feature which has marked previous aggressions. Its success put another heavy premium upon recklessness, the temptation to present Europe with a *fait accompli*, as against the policy of caution, moderation, consultation, adjustment, agreement.

The Reichswehr leaders were against this particular coup. They believed it too risky. Hitler overrode their objection, struck, and, not only got away with it, but got away with it to the applause and barely concealed admiration of the British. It would be true to say that never had Germany been so popular since

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

the War as when she occupied the Rhineland and France objected. And that partly explained the next chapter.

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Thus far the three great 'have-not' states, two of them European states, had been winning all along the line, mainly at the cost of the strategic position of Great Britain. Japan had conquered great provinces in China, Italy had won for herself an Empire in a few months, 'in the face of everybody and everything', Mussolini proclaimed, though in fact nobody had been resisting him with any energy. He had established himself, as we have seen, in an enormously strong position in the Eastern Mediterranean; was in a position to straddle the Suez Canal, to threaten two thousand miles of British frontier. . . .

But meantime, while Japan and Italy were thus carving out their destiny by their 'virile might' what was the mightiest of all three 'have-not' states, the one which had proclaimed more loudly than any the doctrine of expansion by the sword, able to show in the way of new territory or tangible booty?

Just nothing at all. For Germany no Abyssinias, no Manchurias, and clamours for return of colonies were being met by blank refusal. Could Italy then be permitted to exploit the Spanish situation alone?

The answer to that indicates why German armies are in Spain and German commanders applying to ancient Basque cities the principles of 'frightfulness'

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

applied not so long since to Belgian cities. If Germany having already reoccupied the Rhineland, and having achieved her rearmament, could in addition place herself in a position to dominate Gibraltar and occupy submarine bases off the West African coast commanding the Cape route, she could then discuss colonies and other matters with some authority.

At this point Franco enters upon the scene, needing help other than that provided by Moors in his rebellion against the Spanish Government. Franco is master of Morocco, and Morocco might become the master of Gibraltar; and Britain still held Gibraltar.

The Germans, it will be remembered, had great ambitions, constantly thwarted by the British and the French, in Morocco before 1914. It was the arrival of the German gunboat *Panther* in the summer of 1911 off Agadir 'to protect German interests' which brought Europe to the verge of war. It indicates the strategic importance of Spanish Morocco. The European State which controls it also controls the Straits of Gibraltar.

The principal reason why this area was ever handed over to Spain was that Great Britain was opposed to French possession of a coast-line from which British communications with India through the Mediterranean could be menaced. That opposition would naturally apply still more strongly in the case of any other great power. The frontier between the French and Spanish zones is an artificial one, which makes it easy to encourage subversive activities in one zone

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

from the other. Germany worked hard and successfully in this sense during the World War. Spanish Morocco is now in the hands of the Spanish rebels, and will remain so even in the event of a crushing defeat of General Franco in Spain. 'I have the best reasons for declaring,' writes Mr. Vernon Bartlett,¹ 'that in no circumstances would the Spanish Government send troops overseas to win back Spanish African possessions. Spaniards of the Left have never felt any pride in this Empire which has cost the lives of so many of their compatriots and which was King Alfonso's best excuse for organising a large army with a dangerous interest in politics. If Great Britain and France want to dislodge Germany from Spanish Morocco, and even the Canary Islands, they will have to do so themselves. They will get no help from Spain.'

A further reason is that the mountains of the Spanish Riff are rich in minerals which are essential to German heavy industry.

And there is no doubt that already German influence in Morocco is very great. General Franco is paying for the help he receives from Berlin with Moroccan manganese and iron ore. A company known as Hisma, which has its headquarters in Seville but is controlled by the German heavy industries, has been active in supplying ores to Germany. General Franco has granted it the monopoly for the export of all minerals from the Riff, although most of

¹ *News Chronicle*, December 31, 1936.

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

the mining companies are owned by British, French or Spanish shareholders. According to M. Charles Reber, in the Paris weekly paper *Vendred*, Germany pays for the ores she receives by making a corresponding reduction in the amount she is owed by General Franco for munitions.

Mr. Vernon Bartlett who recites some of these facts adds:

'This German penetration in Spanish Morocco will continue, if General Franco wins, with the consent of the new Spanish Government. It will continue, if General Franco loses, without the consent of the present Spanish Government but also without its active opposition. It will continue if Herr Hitler chooses to make the abolition of Articles 141 to 146 of the Versailles Treaty the condition on which he will refrain from further intervention in Spain.

'In any of these cases it is clear that Great Britain and France will lose their feeling of security in the Western Mediterranean as part of the price of their refusal, at the outset of the Spanish civil war, to allow the legal government of Spain to obtain munitions abroad in the legal and normal way.'

The Parliamentary debates as late as April revealed the chaos into which we had been led owing to the destruction of both of two possible international codes by the lack of all policy on the part of the British Government in the recent past. We could have stuck by the old rule that here was an established and legitimate Spanish Government entitled by international law to buy arms and war material abroad for its own protection against internal or external enemies. We

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

who have supplied half the governments of the world with warships, arms and ammunition, have sent our experts into the East and into South America to teach the unlearned how those things should be used, have done more than any other power to make that the recognised right of independent governments. But as soon as the magic word 'Communist' was pronounced we decided that that law must be scrapped, that we must not 'take sides', although there can be no law of any kind in the world unless one 'takes sides' on behalf of the recognised rule as against those who break it. We suddenly changed the old rule just as we suddenly changed it to the disadvantage of the Abyssinian Government when that government also was facing destruction by foreign Fascist troops.

But in destroying the old we refused even more definitely to recognise the new. When large Italian armies, necessarily at the direct command of the Italian Government had invaded Spanish territory for the purpose of destroying the government we might have invoked the principles of the League which compel us to do what we may to make that kind of aggression difficult and could have said that this new technique of aggression threatened the security of all legal government everywhere, unless it happens to be of the Fascist or Nazi type. Instead of this the burden of the recommendation throughout has been for 'impartiality', for not taking sides. But to recommend that we be impartial as between the law and those who break it, means, again, that we stand for its

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

destruction. That may be wise if we hope to establish a new law or rule. But the only law or rule which can emerge from the overthrow of the Spanish Government will, in view of the warm support given by large parties in Britain to the Franco rebellion, be this: That a Fascist Government is justified, or at least can count upon British acquiescence or 'neutrality', in the case of armed intervention on behalf of any party of rebellion anywhere adopting anti-democratic and anti-Liberal principles. This may not have been the intention of British policy, but its result this last few years has been to create the impression that Britannia will indeed 'waive the rules', if in so doing a Fascist dictator is favoured and a 'Left' government embarrassed.

It may well be true that the government has tried to be impartial and carry out the terms of 'non-intervention', but what is undeniable – is indeed quite overt and avowed – is that great sections of the Conservative Party (as distinct from the National Government) make no faintest pretension to being impartial: they desire to see the triumph of Franco, though from the simple point of view of British imperial interests that triumph is the very last thing they should desire.

Mr. Lloyd George (March 26, 1937), put the case in the House of Commons thus:

'Franco was becoming more and more dependent on what we called the foreign invader. If it was true, as was reported in the papers – and that was the only information they could get on which to base a question

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

— that Mussolini meant to organise two more divisions and send them to Spain, what were the government going to do?

‘Signor Mussolini had never concealed from anybody what his ambition was. He wanted to make himself the predominant power in the Mediterranean. He had practically established his authority in the Eastern Mediterranean — and we would not face him.

‘What was he doing in the west? If, with Italian troops, Spain was conquered and became a Fascist state it would be a Fascist state supported by Italian mercenaries. The ports of Spain in the west would be under the control of Mussolini. So would Ceuta, and the Straits of Gibraltar could be blocked.

‘We were doing the same thing in Spain. We were allowing Mussolini to be in a position where he dominated our communications with India. We were doing the same thing with regard to our communications on the high road to the Mediterranean.’

On no conceivable theory could Franco’s victory, with the aid of German and Italian armies, improve the position of the British Empire, particularly its position in the Mediterranean.

But this did not prevent a large section of our Press from becoming violent partisans of the rebels in Spain — violently hostile to the Spanish Government, normally described in that Press as ‘the Reds’. Nor did it prevent the government from taking a position in naval policy which favoured Franco until an explosion of public opinion seems to have brought some modification. Note what the policy was. It is indicated in a dispatch from the *Times*’ St. Jean de Luz

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

correspondent, when the food-ships destined for starving Bilbao began to arrive in the French port:

'On Friday, April 9th, General Franco's agent at St. Jean de Luz, seeing four British destroyers and the six merchant ships together in harbour, reported to insurgent headquarters that the British were assembling a convoy which they meant to escort to Bilbao. General Franco's reaction was immediate. He sent a message direct to Sir Henry Chilton, the British Ambassador, now at Hendaye, in which he informed him that the insurgents were determined that the blockade of Bilbao should be complete and effective; that they regarded the denial of foodstuffs to that and other Government ports as even more important than the denial of war material; and that they would resist any attempt to break the blockade by force, whatever might be the consequences.

'The British Government then had to decide whether they would disregard this threat and escort their merchant ships to Bilbao with overwhelming force or accept General Franco's veto on the passage of shipping through territorial waters while reinforcing their flotilla to a strength sufficient to make interference with British ships outside the territorial limit obviously foolhardy. They chose the latter course.'

The correspondent, giving to the government policy the interpretation which the naval authorities on the spot gave, adds that:

'In doing so, although they gave the appearance of yielding to a threat of force from a rebel general with two or three cruisers and a few armed trawlers at his command, they preserved the letter and perhaps the spirit of non-intervention; for to break the insurgents'

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

blockade by force of arms would clearly have meant open, and thereafter unlimited, intervention on behalf of Valencia.'

The last consideration being balanced by the fact that to yield to Franco's bluff (for subsequent events proved it to be bluff) meant operating his blockade for him and helping to starve the deeply Catholic and very Conservative Basques (not one per cent of whom probably are Communists) into submission to him, his Moors, his Italians, his Nordic (and pagan) Germans.

It is bad enough to employ starvation of civilian populations and its inevitable massacre of little children on behalf of one's own defence and security, or on behalf of the law (as we sometimes do when we send the breadwinner of a family to jail). But to employ it on behalf of a foreign cause the success of which can by no conceivable argument add to one's own national security, but quite certainly the reverse. . . .

Shades of Palmerston and his heirs!

The attitude of much of the 'imperialist' Press may be indicated by two extracts. The first is from the leading article of the *Daily Mail* (November 19, 1936) and is as follows:

'Two Great Powers in Europe, Germany and Italy, yesterday formally recognised the government of General Franco in Spain. Both countries have therefore finally turned their backs on the gang of Communists and murderers who direct the Reds, and in

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

good time have ranged themselves with the future administration.

'Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini thus acknowledge General Franco as the liberator of his country. They well realise that behind him are all the religious, patriotic and sane elements of the nation.

'This acceptance of this conquering régime has long been foreseen and pointed out by the *Daily Mail*, for both Germany and Italy have always made it abundantly clear that they would not tolerate the establishment of another Bolshevist Republic in Europe. . . .

'Great Britain should now show regard for realities and lose no time in recognising General Franco's Government.'

It will be noted that six months after the date of the article Franco had not yet even captured the Spanish capital. The second extract, from the *Morning Post*, is on the morrow of the decision, in defiance of Franco, to send food into Bilbao. The *Morning Post* says:

'British food-ships have reached Bilbao, and everybody here is pleased, because the Basques are interesting people and nobody wants to see them starving.

'The food was rushed to Bilbao by British ships under cover of the guns of H.M.S. *Hood*. There are no mile-posts marking the three-mile limit; and if there were, they would be no good to Franco's warships, for the three-mile limit is covered by the Bilbao batteries.

'Thus by a purely arbitrary action (for a state of partial belligerency, that is to say, being a belligerent within the three-mile limit but not outside it, is unknown to International Law) Britain sides with the Madrid Government and robs Franco of his belligerent rights at the point of the *Hood's* guns.

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

'Fortunately Franco's warships are not looking for trouble; but it would take exactly one shot fired either by or at one of Franco's ships to bring Italy and Germany, which *have* recognised him as a belligerent, into the fray, on the ground that if Britain is going to help Madrid they are going to help Franco. The situation is as dangerous as ever.'

One might remind the critic that the help which he fears Germany and Italy *might* give Franco has been given pretty extensively in the previous six months past; that Germany had already, with violence, insisted upon the right of protecting its own ships upon the high seas. When the German ship *Palos* was captured by the Spanish Government, German cruisers at once seized three Spanish vessels as a reprisal and handed them over to the rebels.

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We have here the development of a new technique by which states dissatisfied with the *status quo* may expand by conquest without formal war at all, a technique rather peculiarly applicable to the break up of the British Empire. The nation contemplating expansion says in effect to an armed political party in a neighbouring country, or to a military clique therein:

'If you care to have a shot at rebellion against your government you can count upon substantial aid from us, in money, military material and volunteers. It will all be very unofficial of course and as a government we shall deny connivance. But you can count on us.'

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

And if you win, and manage to establish yourselves as the government of the country you will, of course, repay us either by concessions of territory or by a general understanding that you will put your foreign policy under our guidance. And note that if you don't thus give the *quid pro quo* this game can be played more than once.'

We saw this technique applied during the War by Germany in Russia; its outcome was the treaty of Brest Litovsk. We have seen it applied in its early stages since the War in Austria, in Czechoslovakia; and in its later stage in Spain, and applied not only with impunity but with support and applause from large sections of British opinion. Yet it will be a miracle if at some favourable moment it is not applied in cases where discontented minorities exist in British territories—in Palestine, India, Egypt, the Sudan, in South Africa. There seems to be no faintest realisation of how far this technique carries the general march against the Empire.¹ To illustrate its possi-

¹ On the occasion of Mussolini's visit to Libya a remarkable document was issued officially by the Italian Government. It explains, with great frankness, Italy's policy towards Islam, both in her colonies and elsewhere. Details are given by Mr. E. D. O'Brien, the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent.

Referring to Moslem unrest in Palestine, Irak, Syria and Egypt, the Italian document declares:

'We state without fear of contradiction that no power has ever had a more strongly sympathetic policy towards these Islamic States and their legitimate claims than has Italy.

'Italy emerged from the Versailles Treaty without a mandate, and was thus under no obligations towards the other powers, which had freely disposed of the Moslem Orient. She was able to profit from this freedom of action and to attempt to attract the friendship of the independent Moslem States and to collaborate with them, politically and economically.

'Where Italy has not been able to intervene directly, as in Syria

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

bilities, imagine a somewhat far-fetched extension of it. Egypt becomes, like Abyssinia, a member of the League, no longer a British Protectorate. A Fascist party arises; has a shot at capturing the Egyptian Government. Italy recognises the revolutionary leader as the true government of Egypt. What are we going to do about it? If we were impotent to resist Italy in Abyssinia, we should be equally

and Palestine, no Moslem movement has ever had to complain of her more than correct attitude.'

The document seeks to reassure Egypt, which has grown noticeably nervous since it achieved independence. It was this nervousness, I learn, which caused the Egyptian frontier authorities to ignore the opening of the road at the Egyptian frontier.

An earlier statement by Signor Mussolini that 'Italy has no designs at any time on Egypt, which I consider as an independent country, not African, but rather Mediterranean', is recalled.

The memorandum emphasises what it describes as the contrast between the religious peace in Libya and the position of Moslems in other countries 'under European influence':

'In Algeria: Rebellion and acts of violence, culminating in the assassination of the Mufti of Algiers and the attempt on the life of the Mufti of Constantine.

'In Morocco and Tunisia: Unrest and political agitation of every type, from Nationalism to Bolshevism.

'In Syria: A number of internal and international questions making it difficult to transform the mandate into self-government.

'In Irak: The bloody overthrow of the Baghdad Government, whose fault was that it had been imposed by Britain in consequence of the Anglo-Irak Treaty.

'In Palestine: Revolt of the Arabs, who are anti-Zionists and anti-English, which still continues under the surface in spite of cruel repression.'

And the Rome correspondent of the *Telegraph* adds this note:

'Signor Mussolini's claim to be the Protector of Islam follows a long campaign of Italian propaganda broadcast in Arabic from Bari wireless station. This is expected to have considerable repercussions on British influence in Arab lands.

'The document on Italian policy issued to-day was hurriedly withdrawn and then reissued in an amended version, with several passages omitted.'

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

impotent to resist her in Egypt. Her position indeed would strategically be immensely stronger.

§

But when we have recited the long list of separate retreats we have not yet perhaps got to the real core of the general policy. That is to be found in the feeling, unavowable until yesterday but now being avowed by large sections of our Press that we ought never to have fought Germany, but to have made an alliance with her; that in other words the policy of the Great War has been based upon an error.

That avowal would have come earlier and be even more frequently made than it is, but for the fact that during the War and for years afterwards the whole thing was most usually explained – or dismissed – with one word: Belgium. The discussions provoked by the recent change in the status of Belgium have at least served to make it clear that Belgium was an incident in the quarrel of other states, that if certain other issues had not been involved the Belgian question would never have arisen. Why did Germany raise it? And why, if our object had been the protection of Belgium, did we not do in 1914 what we did in 1870, and say to Germany ‘Keep out of Belgium and we keep out of the war’? That would probably have saved Belgium. But we could not say it because quite other considerations would, we felt at the time, compel us to come into the war against Germany. And as that realisation grew upon Germany our

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

power ceased to have any value so far as preventing war against Belgium was concerned.

We had no quarrel with Germany on any specific point of policy. Morocco, the Baghdad Railway, and all the other differences had been settled or were out of the picture. Half a dozen statesmen most concerned in the events have testified that Anglo-German relations had not for years been as free from specific differences as they were in 1914. There was no demand which Germany felt she had to make (as to-day she is making demand for more territory) and which we felt we must refuse. One supreme and final consideration moved that part of our public opinion which is decisive in these things, as the same consideration later moved the same kind of opinion in the United States: Germany's victory in the War would place us at her mercy, render nugatory that 'national defence' for which nations, any nation, will give everything. German victory would, we felt, place our most vital interests and rights in her keeping, not ours, enable her to dispose of them at her pleasure, at her discretion. More specifically, a Germany which had annihilated France as a Great Power, overcome Russia, opened the roads to the East through the Slav territories, established complete hegemony of Europe and the Near East, was in a position to occupy, when she would, the Continental ports of the narrow seas — such a Germany would have been master of our policy; irresistible. (She proved to be nearly irresistible, anyhow.) In any future dispute

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

with such a power we should not talk on equal terms. We might as well, in such a contingency, have had no armament at all, because the outcome of any attempt to use it against such a power would have been a foregone conclusion. (Under the *code duello* a fight was stopped immediately one of the duellists became 'placed in a position of manifest inferiority', for then the fight would become mere butchery by the stronger combatant.) Such a position of defencelessness was particularly impossible, we felt, for a world-wide empire. It is indeed one which even little states will not accept without struggle, without at least the gesture of defence (as witness the rearmament of all the little states, including Belgium, this last year or two) although the final outcome of isolated resistance against the stronger power may be tragically certain. Even distant America, at the period of the German onslaught, was stirred by the same spectre of this growing Germanic power. One of the most effective bits of war propaganda in the United States was a map of Europe showing pan-Germania dominating the whole.

There was nothing new or apologetic in this theme that such domination as Germany threatened was incompatible with the defence of the British Empire. As the *Times*,¹ among other serious newspapers,

¹ Thus on August 3, 1914:

'We can no more tolerate a German hegemony in Europe than we can tolerate the hegemony of any other power. As our fathers fought Spain and France in the days of their greatest strength to defeat their pretence to continental supremacy, and their menace to the narrow seas, which are the bulwark of our independence, so

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

repeatedly pointed out after our entrance into the War, to resist domination of Europe by a single power had been our declared policy for two centuries. We, like other free peoples, had stood by it in the Napoleonic era, and it had gained in force since national had replaced dynastic considerations. Indeed, it is clear that if defence means the defence of political independence and sovereignty, so that no external body can exercise its will upon us, then that body must not be stronger than we are since then we would not be independent. We would be subject to the dictation of others, with no means of effectively resisting that dictation. And during the War it would have been, in the prevailing view, a treasonable surrender of national and imperial security to allow the creation abroad of a power, or a combination of powers, so great as to make resistance to it impracticable.

shall we be ready, with the same unanimity and the same stubborn tenacity of purpose, to fight any other nation which shows by her acts that she is advancing a like claim and confronting us with a like threat.'

Again on March 8, 1915:

'Our honour and interest must have compelled us to join France and Russia even if Germany had scrupulously respected the rights of her small neighbours and had sought to hack her way through the Eastern fortresses. The German Chancellor has insisted more than once upon this truth. He has fancied apparently that he was making an argumentative point against us by establishing it. That, like so much more, only shows his complete misunderstanding of our attitude and our character. . . . We reverted to our historical policy of the Balance of Power.

The *Times* maintains the same position five years later (July 31, 1920):

'It needed more than two years of actual warfare to render the British people wholly conscious that they were fighting not a quixotic fight for Belgium and France but a desperate battle for their own existence.'

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

All this, in the War years and before, was almost universally accepted as political truism. (How general was such acceptance this present writer was in a good position to know, because he rejected the prevailing views about the Balance of Power as fatal half-truths and fallacies. To challenge accepted opinion is a good way to learn its extent and depth.) In one respect at least the War confirmed certain of the underlying assumptions of the common view. The power of the Central Empires proved to be enormous – infinitely greater than had been generally anticipated. And if the view that only an equilibrium of opposing forces can secure the defence of each, to say nothing of justice or peace, is sound, the danger of which the enemies of Germany made so much, was a real and portentous danger.

But to-day, this whole theory, accepted in the War years and before the War as so obviously true and the underlying justification of our entrance into the War, is rejected almost as generally as previously it was accepted – rejected sometimes by those who were its most prominent and persistent advocates.

It is strange to reflect that politicians, newspaper writers, authors of distinction, who for years before the War did their utmost to make our participation in it inevitable, now by implication (sometimes explicitly) declare that the whole policy which lay behind that participation was mistaken. Those who previously described so luridly the dangers of German power now tell us that an enormously strong German

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

Mitteleuropa, dominating the Continent, or an overwhelming combination of continental powers, does *not* constitute a menace to our defence and that we should welcome and encourage it; that the ends which it was the whole purpose of the Allied forces of the War to frustrate (e.g., absorption of Serbia into a Germanic Confederation or Hegemony) are in fact desirable ends, or inevitable; that, in other words, the War was a tragic error and need never have been fought; as tragic an error in its realistically political aspects, as in those more idealistic aspects embodied in the popular slogans about 'ending German militarism', 'making the world safe for democracy', the 'war to end war', where failure is so patent that in very decency we try to forget that those slogans moved millions to their death.

If, however, the new view is right, if the German domination of Europe was something which did not threaten us, was something we need not have waged war and given a million of our youth to prevent, it is wise, however tragic the admission, to face the truth and shape our policy according. We shall not make amends to those who perished by sending others after them. And if those who stood for the war in 1914 and for certain policies which led to it, now avow change of opinion, only fools would find ground for disparagement therein. Capacity to change one's opinions in the light of new facts is proof of wisdom far too rare in our changing world. But conscious and deliberate change of

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

policy and opinion is very different from an unnoticed slipping from one policy to an entirely opposed one, without knowing why the change is made, without even knowing that such a change has taken place, with no clear realisation of why the old policy failed, and what elements in it must at all costs be avoided if the result of the new is not to be as bad as that of the old.

Mr. Garvin's 1937 articles in the *Observer* are sufficiently indicative of the degree of change which characterises a great deal of Conservative opinion. Recall for a moment, not only what was until yesterday our attitude towards Mitteleuropa or pan-Germanism and its dangers, but the fact that the direct occasion of the War was the Serbian resistance to Austro-German absorption; that our action was directly designed to support, among other things, the right of small States to be free of German domination, or suzerainty or compulsion; that this cause was supported with a passion and idealism for which some hundreds of thousands sacrificed their lives. And set beside that fact Mr. Garvin's recommendation of to-day, which is that Poland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria to be brought under German domination constituting a German Federation. He recommends it presumably on the ground that 'the German race should have a scope comparable to that of the Soviet Empire'. Of this new German Empire he says:

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

'It would comprehend most of that great geographical sphere in farther Europe, dislocated and disorganised by the war-treaties in the name of emancipation — "Balkanised" as the vivid and true phrase went amongst all intelligent pacifists. The second of the main conditions of constructive peace in Europe as a whole is that a large part of "Eastern Europe" proper shall be reconstructed under German leadership.

'The eastward sphere concerned lies between the Germanic centre of the Continent and the Soviet boundaries. The most vital part of it stretches down the Danube. Not for nothing in the politics of to-day as in past history does the Danube, that longest river-artery of Europe, draw its head-waters from the Reich before it flows far onward through or by many nations to the Black Sea. Through or by Germanic Austria, mixed Czechoslovakia, dismembered Hungary, redoubtable though ill-united Yugoslavia, penalised Bulgaria, and New Rumania. These far-stretching territories, naturally connected, but now split up beyond all reason by racial antagonisms and the consequent restrictive economics, are the seismic region or "earthquake zone" of European affairs. Their present conditions contain more acute causes of future war apt to spread into general war than all the rest of the Continent put together.'

So he would unite them economically by a customs union, though, unlike the old German Zollverein, not on the basis of full free trade within the Federation, but something it would seem along the lines of a Central European Ottawa. Thus:

'The precedent is furnished by the great network of preferential treaties which, in the twenty years before the War, were negotiated by Germany throughout all

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

the areas we have mentioned, and to the remarkable advantage of all concerned.'

He adds:

'For illumination on the nature of the present case, though not on its extent, let us all remember the profound prophecy not of a German but of one of the founders of the modern Czech revival, Francis Palatzky. "If Austria did not exist it would have to be invented." And this holds true in the spirit though the reconstruction necessary would now have to be carried out on a magnified scale, as we have seen. The historic Hapsburg monarchy, though an obsolete political structure in its last period, was an admirable economic system, with far better conditions of general human welfare and progress than now exist where it stood among the disrupted fragments and the "Balkanised" discords of the separated states. They ought to be as efficiently connected with each other and with Germany along the whole course of the Danube as are the American states along that other "ole man river", the Mississippi.'

In other words, the whole plan is pretty much what we accused Germany of desiring to do before the War, and which we entered the War to prevent. She would probably have achieved just such a purpose as that described by Mr. Garvin if we and our Allies had not made war upon her.

This is not the place to examine in detail such a plan. But we may ask how it is consistent not only with the policy of yesterday, with that of the War itself, with the existing commitments of Britain, but with the experience of very recent history.

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

Though the fundamental motives which prompted Britain to enter the War once it started were the fears which the vision of a German hegemony of Europe aroused, the War actually began as a revolt, or arose out of the agitations of national groups in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, which resented the prospect of German overlordship or the actual conditions of Austro-German imperialism. One need only recall the part played by the ferment among the Serbians, the Czechs, the Slovaks, the Croats, the Poles and even the Alsatians (Gabriel Hanataux, the French historian, declared that if the Germans had been able to reconcile the Alsatians there would have been no war) to appreciate what the attitude of some of those national groups would be to the prospect of becoming a minority, subject to the tender mercies of a Brown Shirt Germany. It is true that the present status, particularly on its economic side is, in some respects, worse than the old. A *status quo* created by war is pretty certain to be worse than the one which it was the purpose of the war to correct. Which is the reason for a common guarantee not against change of frontiers, but against change of frontiers by war.

On one ground only could we justly assume that a new and larger German hegemony would work where the old one failed, namely, proof that the Germany of Hitler shows greater capacity for the management of minorities, racial, religious and national, for reconciling them and securing their

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

willing co-operation, than did the Germany of the Kaiser. Well, the history of the German totalitarian state during the last few years in dealing with the non-German elements within its borders answers that question too. Answers it so completely that it need hardly be enlarged upon.

We are warned against 'encirclement' of Germany, against dividing Europe into two groups, one standing for the *status quo*, the other for revision.

Does 'encirclement' mean possession of such power by a group of nations that attack upon it will be dangerous? Then all policies of armed defence are based upon 'encirclement'. And if we are not opposed to the change of the *status quo* by war we favour war as the instrument of change. The new confusions are worse than the old. The evil is not in our power, but in its use to deny to others the defence we claim, to deny them the possibility of peaceful change.

One goes back a few years. Here speaks the British Commander-in-Chief, Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig:

'War is not merely a shock of armies. . . . The Allies must not let themselves be intimidated by the suggestions or menaces of Germany. In offering peace Germany thinks only how to prepare for the next war. If, by misfortune, we would yield to her perfidious appeals, in a few years the drama would recommence bit by bit, country by country. In dividing us, she would again take up her dream of destruction.'

THE RETREAT OF BRITAIN

And here the *Times* (November 11, 1920):

'They felt that this struggle was for their all; not for greatness, not even for safety, but for those high ideals of the race without which greatness is of small account and safety cannot long endure – for ordered liberty, for right and for law, for the abiding peace of which these are the foundations from of old. We celebrate this victory with immeasurable thankfulness, wonder, and awe. We feel how terrible and how near has been the danger, and how marvellous the deliverance. We are proud, but with no insolent pride, of the great things it has been given us to do, and to suffer. . . . With grief we took up the challenge that "militarism" flung down. Not hatred or passion, greed or ambition, moved our people. It was duty, and duty only, that bade them draw the sword, and it was duty that filled them with the deliberate and steady valour that has ever marked this nation when fighting in her cause.'

Well, if certain policies to-day very widely defended are right, all the considerations, moral and political which animates the passages just cited, must be profoundly wrong.

CHAPTER VII

A NEW BALANCE OF POWER?

One rational explanation of our attitude towards Japan, Italy and Germany is that the growing power of Russia imposes upon us a new orientation in the pursuit of a Balance of Power policy. The possibilities of a new 'balance' based on supporting the Have-Not states as against Russia are here considered.

HERE and there (but with curious infrequency), the retreat is justified on grounds of the demands of a new Balance of Power: the power of Russia, we are told, constitutes the same threat of domination which the power of Germany constituted thirty years ago. To weaken Germany or Japan is to expose the world to all the dangers of 'Bolshevist agitation and aggression'. 'If,' argue those putting the case for a Balance of Power in some different form, 'the Hun and Bolshie tear each other to pieces why should we worry?'

Now it is true that the ultimate solution is for us to refuse to ally ourselves either with 'Germany' against 'Russia' or with 'Russia' against 'Germany'. Our alliance should be offered to either or both for

A NEW BALANCE OF POWER?

the support of a rule of international behaviour which is workable all round.

That rule would prevent alliance with a nation that demands the right in all disputes to be its own judge and rejects third-party judgment as 'pestiferous pacifism', which is the present attitude of Germany. To accept that is to abandon defence altogether. Nor, unless we are prepared indefinitely to abandon our empire, can we accept the theory that the Have-Not states must not merely have access to raw materials on equal terms with others, but must actually govern the territories containing the materials with the right to close those territories against us. To grant such a right to Germany is to grant it to Japan, to Italy, to Poland and quite a number of others. Such 'redistribution' would create infinitely more problems than it would solve and would push the world rapidly to utter chaos once more. To accept such a policy is to stand for surrender and to stand for war.

In considering a new balance of power certain elementary facts must be kept in the foreground.

Germany, Italy and Japan, the Fascist states, are also the 'Have-Not' states, 'dynamic', expansionist. If the solution of their economic difficulties is to be along the lines of 'redistribution', economic nationalism and self-sufficiency, it means attempting an unworkable solution at our expense. The solution must be along the lines of equality of access for all nations in the colonial territories of the world and a

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

working towards an international economy. If the Have-Not states will accept this principle they may find a solution of their problems which respects our needs and rights and the security of the British Empire. At present they refuse to accept such a solution. It is not in accord with their political philosophy and ambitions, every day rendered more passionate and irrational by the propaganda their governments maintain. So long as that is the case we must ally ourselves with like minded states in order, not to deny the Have-Nots any rights which we claim for ourselves, but to compel them to respect rights indispensable to ourselves but which are offered equally to them.

The position of Russia in this matter is crucial. The facts which concern us in this connection are (1) She is not in the 'Have-Not' category, is not 'expansionist', is not making claims for colonies; (2) Is quite prepared to accept the internationalist solution; (3) Has become conservative in the sense that she must have stability internally and externally for the success of her economic experiments and (4) Has quite obviously abandoned her 'world revolution' policy.

These points will be developed presently.

But before assuming that we could watch disinterestedly while 'Hun and Bolshie chawed each other up', certain facts must be taken into account.

Any war upon Russia would be most likely to result from the creation of a pan-Germany such as that

A NEW BALANCE OF POWER?

Mr. J.-L. Garvin desires, a Germany which commands the foreign policy of Poland. And the war would not take place unless Japan were an ally of Germany. Russia would not probably be conquered, but she might well be dismembered and her socialist government destroyed. But the prospect of such a Nazi Fascist triumph would threaten France, both in her national aspect and as a democracy of Left tendencies, more seriously than German power has ever threatened her before. All the reasons which prompted her to resist the growth of German power in 1914 would be fortified by the present situation of the world. If France, faithful to her alliance with Russia, entered the war and was defeated, what becomes of 'our' Rhine frontier? And if she does not enter she will certainly be overcome, for her neutrality would ensure the emergence of a Germany in a position to dictate to France. With the disappearance of French defensive power would, according to all current theories, go our defensive power as well.

There is an alternative possibility.

Russia, having had her offers of co-operation with the European democracies rejected, may as a means of warding off alike the German and the Japanese danger discover that after all the Fascist and Communist régimes have much in common – and come to a bargain with Germany, beginning with economic understandings (which have already gone very far) and going on from there to political understandings. A Communist China and India which offered

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

Germany substantial commercial privileges might, alike from the German and Russian point of view, be more advantageous than a Japanese China and a British India which, organised on the basis of Imperial preference, erected economic barriers to both Russia and Germany.

It is quite clear from what precedes that a Balance of Power policy based upon giving a free hand to Germany to do what she will so long as she does not actually touch British territory, is to purchase momentarily better relations with Germany at the cost of surrendering ultimately both imperial security and peace – much worse relations in the end.

§

Again enters the question of that elusive difference between the pre-War psychology and the present.

For several years before 1914, the coming aggression of Germany – envisaged usually in the form of invasion of this country – was the commonplace daily talk and discussion. Plays were produced (*The Englishman's Home* was one), based upon the time when the German army would make a sudden descent upon these shores. The more popular Press constantly published stories of the discovery of secret plans of invasion. The *Daily Mail* published a serial, based upon the forthcoming German invasion, describing the battles that were to take place on British soil. Socialist writers like Robert Blatchford were engaged to enlarge upon the theme. His articles, re-

A NEW BALANCE OF POWER?

published, sold by the hundreds of thousands. We were all told how the German navy made a practice of solemnly toasting 'The Day' when Britain would be humbled by Germany. The late Lord Roberts took an active hand. Political writers made us familiar with the great German Trinity of Treitchke, Nietzsche and Bernhardi. Day by day, week by week, month by month, the fears and apprehensions of the country concerning Germany's intentions were sharpened and intensified.

If, in the years immediately preceding the War, a great world-gathering of states had solemnly pronounced German policy to be dangerous and provocative, we should have regarded that as of immense value to us, a fact which no one but a madman or someone desiring the success of his country's enemy could possibly deplore.

Yet when that very thing did take place in the case of Japan, Italy and Hitlerite Germany, the Press which had been so belligerently anti-German in the pre-War years found the spectacle a distasteful and irritating one, and came to the defence of the dictators. Foreign states should not be scolded. The world should mind its own business. And even when Japan or Italy, having already violated undertakings solemnly given to us, bombarded peaceful cities, slayed and destroyed without declaration of war, in a way which if done by Germany before 1914 would have provoked instant war by us, the selfsame papers who had so consistently maximised

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

every incident of German hostility, extenuate and excuse; and even applaud.

The popular Press of our day, in facing the obviously greater Japanese or Italian or German danger, reverses completely every argument which it used in facing the German danger before the War. Why?

If the growth in power of the orderly Germany of the pre-War era, a Germany of culture, traditions, race, so closely allied to ours, was a menace that we had to fight to the death, what shall be said of the danger presented by a much more sinister Germany allied to an Asiatic power of immense potentialities threatening the security of India, Australia, our Eastern interests as a whole? If that pre-War Germany, aided by Austria and Turkey, was so grave a menace to our Empire and trade, what would be the threat presented by a Nazi Germany, allied, as she would inevitably be in the event of a Russo-Japanese war, with a Fascist Japan?

Consider the most probable contingencies and their relation to Britain's interests. Quite obviously it is part of Japan's hope and plan to do in China what Britain has done in India; to make internal disorder on a large part of the Asiatic continent a means of its conquest; to conquer China, not so much with Japanese power, as with Chinese power, to use Chinese forces of one part for the conquest of the remainder. It will not, of course, be done in a day, but that the plan will be followed persistently Japanese

A NEW BALANCE OF POWER?

history of the last thirty years reveals quite plainly. The attempt, whether successful or not, will inevitably bring Japan into conflict with Russia—much more certainly than British conquest of India made of Russia a potential foe. And if that Japanese-Russian conflict produces war, then just as surely will Germany become the ally of Japan, firstly because Russian victory would be morally intolerable and politically dangerous to Germany, and secondly because the engagement of Russia in a great war would be precisely the opportunity for the 'liberation' and 'outlet' which has become the religion of Hitlerite Germany, preached with flaming fanaticism and all the power of an all-embracing state. The offer of Ukrainian lands to Poland would afford to Germany the means of a 'deal' with Poland about the Corridor, and the defeat of Russia mark for the Germany of Hitler an immense achievement in prestige, in the removal of what Germany regards as her gravest 'moral and political' menace. It would be regarded as a supreme triumph for the new Germany, wiping out all past humiliations; the winning of a great battle in that 'eternal war' against Communism to which Nazidom is sworn. It is hardly necessary to labour the point: if the one Communist state of the world becomes engaged in war Germany becomes the ally of its enemy.

That is why it is true to say that the problem of German power, in so far as it ever was a problem, was not solved in 1918. The problem of a potential

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

German preponderance which faced us in 1914 has become the problem of potential Japanese-German preponderance of infinitely greater urgency. The growth of German power in 1914 did not present us directly with any immediate threat to our Far-Eastern or Antipodean Empire; the Japanese-Teutonic possibility does. The triumph of Teutonic over Slav influence, of German over Russian civilisation, would not have confronted us in 1914, despite the nonsense written at the time, with the triumph of a culture utterly alien to European tradition. But the preponderance in Europe of a Hitlerite, Nazi Germany backed by a Fascist-militarist-autocratic Japan triumphant in the East, would present Western civilisation with a threat much more fundamentally disturbing.

'It is plain, therefore,' a Martian observer might remark, 'that an Empire like the British, as much Asiatic as it is European, will be even more disturbed at the growth of the Japanese-Teutonic power than it was at the growth of the Austro-German power in the years preceding those events of 1914 which compelled Britain to stake her whole existence as an Empire upon the defeat of that combination.'

And therein the Martian, as we have seen, would be entirely wrong. The self-same groups which before 1914 saw in the growth of Austro-German power a menace to the Empire, to Britain's political freedom, to democracy, to Western civilisation, look quite benignly upon the growth of Japanese and German power in the year 1937 and resent bitterly any pro-

A NEW BALANCE OF POWER?

posals for political combinations which might hold it in check.

The explanation, the reader may object, is simple enough: We are afraid of Japan, afraid of Italy, afraid of post-War Germany. We have not power enough to take a vigorous line.

Well, Germany in the years preceding 1914 was a powerful and redoubtable enemy. The fact did not have the effect of producing the sort of submissiveness or acquiescence in aggression which we adopt in the post-War cases; German power had the quite contrary effect. And as to not having power; it is clear that America, Russia and China are all potential allies, and if a combination of the United States, Russia, China, Britain, with other states at the very worst benevolently neutral does not constitute power enough for decisive resistance to attach upon our rights and interests, what power would?

CHAPTER VIII

WHY THE NEW JOHN BULL ?

What is the ultimate explanation of the fact that so much of British opinion adopts towards other nations guilty of aggressions which worsen the defensive position of the Empire, an attitude of 'jubilation' which would have been utterly inexplicable before the War? If the commonest explanation – that this attitude is dictated by fear of Moscow Communism and 'world revolution' – is correct, then clearly it is a fear now completely out of date, which disregards the facts and ignores the changes of the last twenty years.

CAPTAIN LIDDELL HART, examining the strategic position of Great Britain in the Mediterranean, as affected by German and Italian intervention on behalf of Franco, remarked recently this:

'Strategically, the danger is so obvious that it is hard to understand the eagerness with which some of the most vocally patriotic sections of the British public have desired the rebels' success. Class-sentiment and property-sense would seem to have blinded their strategic sight.'

But that, as Captain Liddell Hart doubtless realises is an over simplification. The thing is more complex. How, in the last analysis do we explain the conduct

WHY THE NEW JOHN BULL?

of the Capitalist, Conservative order in Great Britain, the British Right, in receding so frequently, so consistently, so supinely before the Japanese, German and Italian challenge? If ever economic interests which are supposed to push capitalist states to war were involved they were involved in the case of the Japanese aggression. Yet war, or any line which might lead to war, has been refused in the Japanese as in the other cases.

In all interpretations of motive and purpose in politics there must be some element of guess (especially as the subconscious, imponderable, operates in national even more than in personal action). But the following conclusions are not likely to be far wrong:

(1) In so far as a General Will of Capitalism can be said to exist, it is at present plainly afraid of war. In view of the experience of the last war there is quite unmistakably a general feeling that another world war would see the end of capitalism as we know it. Even Socialist writers like Mr. Cole agree that this would be the almost inevitable result; and that outcome is not unnaturally disliked by the capitalist. There is no reason to suppose that the fear of war expressed by Conservatives is insincere, however much their policy may increase the dangers which frighten them.

(2) There is also some fear of what would result to the present order if Fascist states were involved in difficulties and brought down as the result of measures short of war; of what would have

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

happened inside Italy if economic sanctions, or some measure like the corking of the Suez Canal, had brought about the defeat of Mussolini's venture.

This means that there is a co-operation, only partially conscious at present, across frontiers, irrespective of national divisions, between the 'authoritarian order' throughout the world; a sub-conscious co-operation perhaps of world Capitalism: that it is ceasing to be nationalist when it comes to facing the common enemy of Communism. It is the 'class war' in a form not quite that of the Marxian forecast—with the bourgeoisie forcing the revolution. Incidentally, the situation in France seems to confirm this. There is now, at long last, a tendency towards Franco-German reconciliation, even alliance. But the movement does not come from the Socialists, nor from the Communists, nor from those workers whom the Communist manifesto called upon to unite. It is indeed opposed by the Left generally. The movement has its roots in the extreme Right, originating among the Chauvinists, the Nationalists, the Militarists, the Fascists. It is, however, at present a movement nascent and hesitating.

(3) The conclusion of the Franco-Soviet Pact, even under a Laval government indicates, in any case, that the fear of Sovietism in France is less acute than the fear of German power; that politico-military pre-occupations over-ride the more properly economic. And this, of course, is true on both sides:

WHY THE NEW JOHN BULL?

Russia is prepared to enter into arrangements with a Capitalist Government for the defence of Communist Russia.

(4) In the case of Britain, Conservative distrust and dislike of the League has been definitely stronger than fears for Imperial security. Rather than add to the force of internationalism in the world, accept a resounding success for the League – which the defeat of Italian aggression upon Abyssinia would have involved, Conservatives have preferred to accept grave risks for the Empire, to see a hostile Imperialism straddling the route to India.

There is nothing the least new, of course, in the fact that motives of prejudice and fanaticism should override motives of interest. When we assume that motives of interest, which usually mean economic advantage, are the determining motives of conduct, it implies that the advantage is recognised, that interest is correctly interpreted and that such factors as temper and fanaticism do not sway judgment of interest, of material advantage. But we know from daily observation of those about us that this is simply not so; that men are repeatedly mistaken in the interpretation of their interest. The same allowance must be made to an even greater extent – a much greater extent indeed – in the case of the conduct of groups. In more senses than one it is true to say, as an historian once said, that every war is a religious war; that when men can be persuaded to die, they have responded to appeals other than those of interest.

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

It is certainly quite safe to say that had the kind of challenge to British interests which Japan and Italy have issued this last year or two been issued before 1914, their policy would have been resisted at the risk of war. If it is not so resisted to-day it is because, apart from the considerations just outlined, the challenge has not presented itself as a challenge to Britain, but as a challenge to the League, and we know that 'the League' is commonly conceived, particularly by its critics, not as a group of states pursuing a defensive policy in common, but as an entity apart from its members. It is an entity for which very many Conservatives have an intense dislike.

The Socialist explanation that it is hostility to the Socialism of Russia and friendliness to Fascism which determines the choice is true in some measure but needs important qualifications. France is also a Capitalist state; but she is in virtual alliance with Russia, and in a war between Russia and Germany, would certainly not side with Fascist Germany. Military and political considerations would, with France, quite certainly take precedence of hostility to Socialism. Furthermore, it is a favourite Socialist doctrine that the Capitalist struggle for markets is the prime cause of war. No competition has recently been more strongly felt than the competition of Japan; no nation has become so much of a bogey to our traders and industrialists as Japan. Yet our Conservatives favoured the Japanese military advance.

We shall never explain such a phenomenon, and

WHY THE NEW JOHN BULL?

never indeed get at the inwardness of political behaviour generally, if we persist in ascribing to it the same degree of rational consideration which men commonly give to their personal affairs. Compare the amount of rational attention which goes to making a man a member of a given political party, or prompts him to take sides violently in some political dispute with the amount of persistent care which as a successful manufacturer of hairpins or cigarettes he gives to the manufacture and sale of hairpins or cigarettes. More genius (and money) goes to the scientific advertising of cigarettes than to clarifying the major political problems of mankind.

In politics we have creeds, prejudices, fanaticisms. Those things hardly enter into business when divorced from politics. The conduct of our Conservatives and Capitalists in the series of events with which we have been dealing is explicable mainly by a sort of casualness of conviction and decision when it comes to politics: which they would certainly not apply to the conduct of business.

The average voter acquires a 'conviction' about political principles. He comes to believe that these damned Socialists, or Pacifists, 'the gang of murderers in Moscow' or 'the interfering busybodies in Geneva' are mischievous and contemptible. The whole character of Socialism or Pacifism, the relation of their purpose to his own interests, may, in the course of political changes completely alter. But his conception of them does not alter and his prejudices

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

remain. (And, of course the generalisation applies also the other way on: The Marxist usually talks of Capitalism exactly as the Prophet talked of it seventy years ago.)

The power of momentum contained in old habits of thought, the strong instinctive resistance to new ideas, is a motive of conduct whose force is usually very gravely under-rated. It is certainly stronger in many minds than any economic consideration, particularly in these days when the balance of economic advantage for any group – financiers as against cheap-money industrialists, industrialists as against agrarians, merchants as against home producers, home farmers as against Dominions . . . is so uncertain. A man may well be puzzled these days to know which policy *is* most favourable to his economic interests. In times of puzzlement and intellectual indecision, feelings, instincts, prejudices take command.

If what we have been witnessing in these retreats implied a clear-eyed acceptance of the non-resister position, or even of the position of a small power, conscious retirement from the imperial game, there would be grounds for hope. But those who rejoice at Mussolini's successes whether in Abyssinia or in Spain, are certainly not Pacifists. They happen to be ardent advocates of an immense rearmament. To rejoice that Mussolini should have made our position in the Mediterranean strategically all but impossible, and then demand immense armaments in order

WHY THE NEW JOHN BULL?

that we may defend our position in the Mediterranean, indicates perhaps that water-tight compartment mind which is not uncommon in politics. One compartment rejoices that an exponent of authoritarian government has once more triumphed, dishing the Pacifists, the Geneva-fists, the Socialists and the Communists, and keeping Moscow at bay. If later, into the other compartment dawns a light which reveals that, as the result of that Fascist triumph, a dangerous situation has been created for the Empire, why, of course, there is only one remedy – more arms. Again, the prejudices are more powerful than the interests. We are all familiar with the party man who would far rather see the country suffer some definite damage than see the opposition get the credit for the remedy. Having nursed for years a bitter hostility to Geneva and to all internationalist schemes, the imperialist would rather see the Empire endangered than have it aided or protected by Geneva.

Nevertheless it may be true that the dominant motive in the support of Fascist aggression, is fear and hatred of Moscow – fear of that financial and economic collapse which would result, we are assured, from Socialist triumph; fear of the destruction of constitutional government; fear generally of Moscow's interference and intervention; fear even of anti-Christian propaganda.

Now it is noteworthy that most of Western Europe has known this last few years all those things –

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

financial and economic chaos, the destruction of constitutional government by violent revolution, foreign interference and military intervention; hostility of governments to organised Christianity. None of it in Western Europe has come from Moscow. The dreadful economic and financial chaos, which included over much of Europe the utter breakdown of the whole monetary device and the near collapse of the whole capitalist system, occurred under Capitalist and Conservative governments, was indeed in large part the direct result of policies imposed by the Allied governments when they were of an extremely conservative character. There have been revolutions – from the Right. Constitutional government has been destroyed – by Fascism. And there has been interference and military intervention. The fashion was set by Great Britain in military invasions of Russia and the attempt to destroy the Socialist Government of Moscow. (It is well to remember that if Moscow had not been able to defend itself militarily it would have been destroyed by foreign armies, or Russian armies equipped by foreign nations – Britain contributing to the extent of about a hundred million sterling, in much the same way as the Fascist armies of Italy and Germany are now attempting to destroy the popular government of Madrid.) We have had also, it is true a challenge to Christianity and the authority of the churches. The most dangerous form of that challenge has been, without any doubt whatever, from the Nazi régime in Germany.

WHY THE NEW JOHN BULL?

We have therefore a situation in which the things, which our Conservatives and Imperialists fear Moscow might do in the West, have actually been done by the Conservatives and the Fascists, whom our Imperialists do not fear at all and have not been done by the Communists who for years have kept our bourgeoisie awake nightly. As a matter of fact, of course, the Communist-complex is utterly out of date. Russia plainly wants to be left in peace to go on with her internal development, a difficult enough task. Her arming is at least justified by what is, historically, very recent experience. It was only by the use of arms that she was able to save her government from destruction by foreign intervention. The 'world revolution' policy is plainly abandoned, though, since all dictatorships are compelled to resort to demagoguery, the slogans which the masses love, may be preserved. And finally, while Moscow, however haltingly, moves towards constitutionalism and democracy, the Fascist states move further therefrom. The anti-God campaign in Russia is equally being quietly abandoned, and the Russian anti-God societies losing their membership.

Those who get the jitters about the 'menace of Communism' ought to be compelled to state which Communism they fear. For there are two Communisms in Moscow to-day—the Communism of the opposition which favours world revolution and the old conceptions and the new Communism of the government which wants co-operation with the West.

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

To destroy the present Moscow Government (engaged at the moment of writing in putting on trial for their lives the Bolshevik Old Guard who accuse the government of reverting to Capitalism) would be to increase the very dangers which our Conservatives profess to fear.

It would certainly be true to-day to say that Capitalism or orderly economic evolution in Western Europe is much more threatened by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, by the shifts in the way of monetary control and tariff policy to which they will be driven, by the state controls their war preparations will involve, than it is by Russian Communism. As much would it be true to say that the Nazi attitude to Christianity, using that is the power of a highly organised state to create a new religion, pagan and anti-Christian, in place of that of the Jew Christ and the Jewess Mary, is infinitely more dangerous from the Christian point of view than the crude anti-Godism of Russia, now in any case so largely abandoned.

The survival of Russia not only as a Socialist state but even as a national one depends upon her being able to resist the pressure of the two powerful nations, whose very religion is militarist and expansionist. In resisting Japan, Russia has a prospective natural ally in the most economically powerful state in the world, America; and in resisting Germany the most powerful military nation of the world, France and her satellites. Events have proved that to stir up revolution to-day in the Western World is to produce not Com-

WHY THE NEW JOHN BULL?

munism, but Fascism. In this set of circumstances the only sane policy for Russia is to draw closer to both America and France. Incidentally, if the new alignment of power ever results in war, we shall find Capitalist governments in alliance with a Communist one for the purpose of resisting the two most definitely anti-Communist states of the world. Is this the 'class struggle' of the Marxian theorist? And when France goes to war in order, incidentally, to enable Russia to defend Communism, will that be a Capitalist and Imperialist war which the Marxian assures us the wars of Capitalist states invariably are?

The simple truth, of course, is that France will be putting her nationalism above her dislike and fear of Communism; a political above an economic consideration. Russia will be allying itself with Capitalist states in order to confront Fascist Capitalist governments, which other Capitalist governments will be ready enough for political reasons to oppose – all to the greater security of the first Communist and proletarian experiment of history. Hardly, again, 'the class war'.

One could almost hope that Germany's refusal to accept the *status quo* and her determination to change it by war at the first opportunity, remains as clear in the future as it is at present. For that clear determination, coupled with the advance of Japan in the East, would give a unity of political aim to the non-German world which, in the past, it has not possessed, which the position of Russia and America made impossible.

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

The Russian attitude towards the League, towards the whole problem of world order, has in the past been that the disorder, and its resultant wars, arose from the fact of Capitalism; that it could take no part in an effort to protect or perpetuate 'the Capitalist order'; that it desired the overthrow of Capitalist governments. The Nazi revolution has changed it all: the overthrow of existing Capitalist governments does not at all necessarily make for the advance of Communism; revolution, as Trotsky, in a recent issue of the American *Mercury* admits, may set back enormously the general advance of Socialism. And the Socialists begin to see it.

CHAPTER IX

TOWARDS A COHERENT POLICY

If certain principles animate our policy the machinery and the name we give it are relatively unimportant. The broad principles are clear and are here indicated.

BECAUSE the purpose of this book is to call attention to a dangerous tendency rather than to devise new plans or machinery, only the broadest outline of a policy alternative to retreat can be indicated.

But defined policy, for all the reasons developed in the earlier pages, there must be.

Heretofore Britain has not perhaps much needed a consistent foreign policy—and has not had it—because her position had naturally such elements of strength that she could, with relative impunity, make mistakes that would have been fatal to other states.

As Mr. Guerard, the American writer, once put it, England has not been saved by muddle; her natural advantages were so great as to offset the muddling. He says of the English:

It is only in retrospect that they rationalise their drifting into a national purpose. Downing Street and the *Times* cover chaos with a thick coating of impressive verbiage. As a matter of fact, it is impossible

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

to chart England's course to-day. She has no single principle of action, not even 'sacred egotism'; she has at least five, and they are incompatible. The result is that, whilst individual Englishmen are intelligent and honest, 'England' as a character in the international drama is thoroughly undependable. It is not 'perfidy'; it is inner contradiction. England was honest when she promised to evacuate Egypt, and honest when she constantly refused to do so; honest when she pledged her support to France in case of aggression under the Locarno pact, and honest when she reminds the world that such an agreement is to be taken only in a Pickwickian sense.

Mr. Guerard's conclusion, by the way, is interesting. He says:

Neither England nor America can have a position and steady policy antagonistic to each other. On the basis of mere national selfishness, they cannot unite. Their one hope, and the one hope of the world, is that they shall work together in the organisation and enforcement of international law.

The main lines of a policy which, put forward clearly as that for which Great Britain stands, would secure the support of the Dominions and the increasing co-operation of America, are broadly as follows:

First, as to German grievances, raw materials and so on, let us make clear that we are willing to have the facts fully elucidated. Will Germany, Italy and Japan stand with us for the establishment of a Fact-Finding Commission to answer such questions as whether the Have-Not states are at a disadvantage in

TOWARDS A COHERENT POLICY

their access to raw materials and if so, what is the nature of the disadvantage?

Second, let us ascertain whether the Have-Not states will undertake to publish freely among their own peoples the findings of such a Commission. (An important condition.)

Third, let us make it clear that in those cases where sincere difference of opinion exists – where the condition which one side of the frontier regards as obviously just and the other as outrageously unjust – we stand for the umpire principle in some form. Will the Have-Not states accept that principle, agree either to accept impartial judgment or refrain from war as a means of correcting what they regard as unjust? (Since alteration of the *status quo* by war means a new one at the will of the conqueror, it creates as many injustices as it corrects.)

Fourth, since the whole case of the principal Have-Not states is that the *status quo* becomes with the passage of time inequitable, will they agree to the creation of institutions or organs of peaceful change, and co-operate in their functions?

Fifth, we should make it clear that we form with other states accepting those principles a defensive alliance or confederation based on the principle that an attack on one is an attack on all. Such an alliance we should point out is not 'encirclement' because membership is open to all, on equal terms; we offer to others the precise principle of defence we claim for ourselves. (The nucleus of such an Alliance

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

would be Britain, France, Russia, Czechoslovakia, drawing in later Poland, Jugoslavia, Rumania.)

If the Have-Not states co-operate on those terms we have re-created the League. If they do not co-operate, it is still more necessary to maintain that confederation among as many allies as we can obtain. For arms, allies and commitments we shall have in any case. It is better that the alliance should make an acceptable offer to 'the other side', than merely create a competitive combination which neglects to make any provision for the security of others, who would otherwise regard it as a threat to themselves.

The probability is, of course, that as soon as our political commitments have no longer a 'League' connotation, no longer a 'Geneva flavour', Conservative opposition will fall away. The assumption seems to be that commitment on behalf of 'the League' is commitment for some vague and dangerous altruistic purpose remote from British interest; but that the commitments of the old kind, like those which involved us in 1914, are on behalf of definite British interest; are 'realist' where the Geneva arrangements are 'sentimental'; that the old alliances were safe and protective; the Geneva alliance dangerous and aggressive.

If, by calling the political principle of collective defence, which underlies the League's effort, by some other name, we can secure the adhesion of the enemies of 'sentiment' (who fear words so much more than

TOWARDS A COHERENT POLICY

the things which they express), there is, of course, a good deal to be said for changing the name.

If in the course of the next few years the Grand Alliance which seems now in process of formation stands mainly for the principles outlined; if it makes it clear that it guarantees, not frontiers but peace; that the significance of frontiers may be greatly modified by voluntary agreements; that the chances of real and lasting change are better in that direction than by the hazards of war, then we may create a situation in which it will gradually become plain to the German people (and government) that for Germany to continue outside the combination would expose her to more risks and give her less power than she would possess as a member of the club.

The ultimate outcome will depend upon whether any sanity at all can modify the nationalist scale of values now accepted by the peoples of the world.

The world over the Nationalist has a scale of values which might be indicated thus:

Rather than that one peasant now under our rule shall pass to foreign rule, even though that rule be better than our own, we will see a million of our people perish on the battlefield. Rather than yield one acre of our land, though it be but worthless barren rock, we will see the world in agony, and all justice, all mercy, all pity, all decency perish from the earth.

So long as that is our scale of values, as, in fact, it is with the nationalist, there can be no peace and, of course, civilisation must perish. But there is no

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

warrant whatever in experience for supposing that such standards of value are immutable. It is of their very essence to be subject to infinite variation and unending change, as has been shown by the story of religions (and nationalism is one of our newest religions, not alone in Germany replacing Christianity) as well as by the story of certain political causes (a passionate British resistance to Irish Home Rule had been transformed to complete indifference in less than ten years). If nationalism has lasted so long in a civilisation which the continuance of war must destroy, it is in part because it has been so seldom challenged on moral and intellectual grounds that it can still masquerade as the highest of political virtue. But the very outrageousness of the German manifestation is likely to provoke a questioning of 'virtue' which bear such fruits; may prompt an increasing number who still preserve some social conscience to inquire why and in what way these impulses which once may have had some social utility have become perhaps the great anti-social force existing in the world to-day, destructive of those purposes which we had assumed organised society had been created to promote.

CHAPTER X

MARGINAL NOTES

This chapter is in the nature of an appendix dealing with specific points of misunderstanding and confusion as they have arisen in public (mainly newspaper) discussion. Because the real enemy is confusion and misunderstanding, these notes on specific points, even though covered elsewhere in the book, may prove of use to the reader.

OUR real enemy has been confusion. It may help in clearing up some of the confusions which have bedevilled policy, to reproduce a series of 'marginal notes' made in various forms (mainly letters to the Press), on points of discussion which have arisen during these past few years. These 'marginal notes' follow.

'We have no power to restrain Italy and Sanctions mean war.' Such were the 'slogans' current during the first part of 1935. They provoked this letter to the *Times*:

'A month or two since I ventured to suggest in your columns that if we really meant what our Government is always saying about the Covenant being the "key-stone", the "sheet anchor", the "life-line" of our foreign policy; if, indeed, we had regarded the defence

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

of the Covenant to be as important as the defence, say, of some small West Indian island, this crisis would never have arisen and the peace of the world would have been preserved.

Italy knows that an attempt to seize, say, Malta would be resisted by all the power of the British Empire. Therefore its seizure is not attempted. The British policy of so defending British territory does not involve war. Nor would a similar definiteness of intention to defend the Covenant, had that intention been sufficiently plain in time, have involved war. It is uncertainty as to what we would do that in truth explains the drift to war. While Italy knows that there would be no question at all about our defending Australia or New Zealand, or for that matter St. Kitts, in the West Indies, defending them single-handed, without talking of the difficulties into which we might get with the United States on account of blockade or what not, Italy also knows, unhappily, that we are in two minds about the defence of the Covenant. And upon that uncertainty, that division of will, the military dictator is ready to gamble.

Our difficulty, therefore, is not in the last analysis a material one, a lack of means and power, but absence of any clear conviction as to how that power may best be used defensively. On behalf of the tiniest British colony seized by a foreign state the whole power of the Empire would be invoked, not because of the intrinsic importance of that particular morsel of territory, but because to yield thus the defensive principle in one instance would sooner or later involve its impotence everywhere.

‘We get this absurdity: Defence without war for the tiniest and remotest Colony can be secured by Britain’s sole power, acting “silently”. Defence for a principle upon which rests the whole of civilisation

MARGINAL NOTES

(including presumably the Empire) cannot be secured at all.

'Something over a hundred years ago, at the suggestion of a British statesman, the then weak and feeble United States proclaimed the doctrine that any attempt to conquer an American state would be regarded as an attack upon itself. By so doing the United States established a collective system of defence for the Western Hemisphere as against European "expansion". The United States did not wait for the agreement of the twenty nations of the American continent. It gave a lead which, within the intended limits, has been successful. A similar lead on this side of the world by a state far more powerful than was then the United States would give an equally successful result.'

Subsequent to this letter Sir John Fisher Williams, the eminent authority on international law, wrote to the *Times*:

'The Covenant thus does not impose upon a member of the League any legal obligation to go to war. If some member of the League, in violation of the Covenant, resorts to war against another member (not all "resorts to war" are violations of the Covenant) the members who take the view that the Covenant is violated are bound to collective action (sanctions) in the shape of an economic and financial blockade or steps in that direction. Such action may, and in some cases probably would, involve ultimately military action, at least to maintain the blockade. But this military action is not a legal obligation of the Covenant. . . .

'On the other hand, in the case of such a wrongful resort to war, a member of the League may at once itself resort to war against the wrong-doing state. Whether the approval of the Council of the League is

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

required for such action is perhaps doubtful; the better opinion seems to be that legally it is not. Such a resort to war is not a violation of the Briand-Kellogg Pact, as the wrong-doing state by its own warlike action will have violated that pact and disentitled itself to rely upon its protection.'

§

What is coercion?

A number of eminent men write to the *Times* criticising the Covenant because it is an instrument of 'coercion'. The names include several who are known as ardent advocates of rearmament. Previous letters had criticised the unwisdom, folly and even wickedness of attempting to 'coerce' Italy. The criticisms provoked the following comment:

'If this country were the victim of unprovoked aggression on the part of some continental power, and fought to defend its soil, is it guilty of "coercing" the enemy?

'If, realising that we by our own forces are so inferior to a potential enemy as to be undefended, we arrange with France for mutual assistance in resisting him, and he attacks, is *that* coercion?

'If to the two nations thus combined for common defence are added others—say a group of small states like Belgium—does this addition make a "coercive League" so severely condemned by these critics?

'They must be aware that we make an alliance or abandon defence altogether. The only way to deprive it of danger is to make it clear that it does not stand for the "encirclement" of those outside it, because it is open to them to join it; to make it clear that the mem-

MARGINAL NOTES

bers are ready to offer to others the same means of defence they claim for themselves; the same rights, in return for the same obligations.

'Alliances we are going to have. If they stand for the defence not of this or that state but of a principle of defence which creates equality of right, if, that is they are to lose the very element of danger which made them disastrous before 1914, then, and only then it would seem, do they become the thing these critics condemn.'

Security and the problem of national grievances

A letter to the *Times* (signed 'Arnold, Astor, Henry Carter, John Fischer Williams, Edward Grigg, Hardinge of Penshurst, George Lansbury, F. O. Lindley, Lothian, Edith Lyttelton, Charles E. Raven, Rennell, Sanderson, Donald Soper, Trenchard') contains the following passage:

'To commit ourselves not only to economic but to automatic military action, instead of *equipping the League to do justice as between nations, is simply to increase and not diminish the risk of explosion*. It will inevitably result in dividing the world into two great military alliances, the one standing for the *status quo*, the other for revision of it.'

It provoked this comment:

'The signatories of the letter suggest that the League will be better equipped to "do justice between nations" – modify frontiers, attenuate economic nationalism, reduce armaments, ensure equality of right – if it does not concern itself with the problem of defence (the defence, that is, of its constituent members), although it is quite obvious that the main motive of the

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

unjust frontiers, the struggle for economic self-sufficiency, great armaments, is national security, the determination of every state to ensure, first of all, its safety. Guns before butter – or justice to foreigners. “Self-preservation is the first law.”

‘Note what the real meaning of this demand that the League, while making no provision at all for the satisfaction of the deepest of all national impulses (which is indeed the deepest impulse of all living things) shall nevertheless modify frontiers which are unsound, abate economic nationalism, limit armaments, give to Germany the equality which is her natural right. A state, already fearful for its security, is asked by its neighbours to weaken itself by revision of some frontier at present strategically advantageous, by surrender of territory, by lessening its economic self-sufficiency, reducing its armaments. But it is told at the same time that it must expect no help from those who make these demands if it is attacked as the result of complying with them.

‘This is not realism; it is not equity. Remedy of grievances, “revision”, is not an alternative to the policy of collective security. The latter is the condition *sine qua non* of being able to carry any just revision into effect; of any hope of change in the *status quo* except by war, which means change at the dictation of the victor, the last status in that case being worse than the first. To argue “there can be no security till we get justice” is to invert the truth, which is that we shall never get justice till we have managed to organise our common defence on a mutual and collective basis.

‘The signatories of the letter under discussion – some of whom are ardent advocates of rearmament – imply that defence must be organised unilaterally, each his own defender, as in the years that led to 1914. The collective method they say will turn every local war into a world war. Yet when a shot in a Balkan village – a

MARGINAL NOTES

"local" war indeed – actually did involve practically the whole world, the result was not due to the entanglements of the League or the collective system, for those things did not exist. Nor did Britain and Germany drift to war because of unresolved specific differences between them, because, that is, Germany was making demands (as to-day she is demanding territory) which we felt we had to refuse, or vice versa. The War arose out of the fears which each entertained of the growing power of the other, out of that system of each defending himself or his interests and not any agreed rule of peace, the system which the signatories imply is preferable to any alternative collective method.'

§

Alliances, Defence and Peace

Sir Charles Mallet writes to the *Times*:

'Sir Norman Angell, if I understand him rightly, argues in the *Times* to-day that, so far as the Covenant of the League is concerned, peace is a secondary object, that the real problem of the nations is defence, and that this can best be solved by forming a Grand Alliance based on the principle that war on one is war on all. The presumption, apparently, is that this Grand Alliance would have immense forces at its disposal *and would use them promptly and effectively to punish any offender* who transgressed its laws. These methods clearly cannot be described as embodying a policy of peace. They seem to bear a strong resemblance to those which devastated Europe twenty years ago.

I would venture to put these questions:

'(1) Is it not probable that under this system all ideas of working for disarmament and for a better understanding between nations would have to give way to

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

any proposals needed to *enable the Grand Alliance to crush its opponents*? The fact that the wars waged by the Grand Alliance would be high-minded and collective wars, with peace presumably as their objective in some remote, uncertain future, would not sensibly diminish the enmities and destruction which they caused.

‘(2) What reason is there to suppose that the Great Powers within this Grand Alliance, still less Great Powers like Germany and Italy, Japan and the United States, which would probably remain outside it, are in the least inclined to give up organising their own system of defence, or to hand the duty over to any collective authority whatever?’

‘(3) And what practical steps would Sir Norman Angell have us take for inducing the nations to do so?’

The reply being:

‘Sir Charles Mallet puts me a number of questions based on what he deems to be my suggestions – a Grand Alliance

that would have immense forces at its disposal and would use them promptly and effectively to punish any offender who transgressed its laws.

‘It is not my suggestion. It is what now exists. This country is at the present moment engaged in greatly increasing its armed forces. The fact proclaims its intention of going to war if certain laws laid down by itself and its allies are transgressed. The laws are complicated, unstable, and uncertain. The alliance would probably at this moment punish ruthlessly any transgression of the law respecting the integrity of Belgium. But the swallowing whole of Abyssinia, which we were pledged to defend certainly as much as we were pledged to defend Belgium, was hardly punished at all. An

MARGINAL NOTES

attack on Egypt, about which there is no formal law, would almost certainly be punished; on Palestine, about which there is a very formal law indeed, the attack, so long as effected through native terrorists, paid or unpaid, is unlikely to be punished at all. Such an alliance and such a method can give us neither peace nor defence. Yet alliances there must be. The League itself is an alliance, as for that matter is organised society wherever it exists.

'If we are to defend ourselves at all it means that we must defend ourselves against alliances, and we can only do that by ourselves making alliances. We had a bakers' dozen of allies in 1914, and seemed to need them. If, once more, we were faced by the kind of danger which we felt confronted us in 1914, we should once more act as we did then. That is to say, we should, suddenly, with the danger on top of us, make the tragic decision to go to war. But our forces would not then be instruments for the prevention of war.

'What the common objection to alliances really comes to is not that we should not make them but that we should not make the fact of their existence or their commitments clear beforehand; that we should wait for such clarification until the moment of war. And it would then be too late. We will fight when the danger is on top of us, but we will not say clearly beforehand that we will fight, so that no fighting will be necessary.

'Had those nations which were ultimately drawn into the War against Germany made it plain to Germany before 1914 that if she followed a certain line of policy they would oppose her and, if it came to war, be on the side against her, she would not have followed that line and there would have been no war. Indeed many respectable historians have averred that if one state, ourselves, had made clear beforehand what we would do, there would have been no war. In other words, if the

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

Allies had said in time that they would do what at last they were obliged to do, they would not have had to do it, and the tragedy would have been avoided. But only, in my view, for a time, unless something else were added; something which constitutes an even more vital distinction between the pre-War alliance and the alliance of the type which embodies the League principle.

'The type of alliance which alone can combine defence with peace is one in which

(1) Members submit disputes to arbitration, third-party judgment in some form; (2) the member fulfilling that condition, if attacked by another state not so fulfilling it, is defended by the power of the whole; (3) membership open to all accepting these conditions.

'Why should an alliance so conceived render more difficult than the present system the disarmament and better understanding between nations which Sir Charles Mallet desires? And in what way, more than under the existing method, does it ask that other nations should "give up organising their own system of defence" or ask them to "hand the duty over" to an alien collective authority?'

§

The old alliance or the new?

It was at a time (March 1936) when much of the public still feared us committing ourselves to France. Thus the following:

'We are warned from many quarters about the danger of "making alliances with France", of conversations between the staffs, and are urged instead to "act through the League". There is certainly some danger here of

MARGINAL NOTES

falling into grave confusion owing to a careless use of words. The danger is not in an alliance – the League itself is an alliance – but in allowing an alliance designed to be the nucleus of a true European society upholding a principle of security which can be applied to all alike becoming an alliance which is in fact a challenge to that principle.

The older type of alliance was exemplified in the two groups that confronted each other at the outbreak of the War. The growing power of Germany threatened to deprive us of all means of defending our interests and rights. Germany saw the War close by a hostile preponderance which deprived her of any means of defending her interests and rights and which imposed the Treaty of Versailles. If she was secure, we were not; if we were secure, she was not. The only recourse open to a state threatened by hostile preponderance was to fight.

Collective alliances offer another alternative to a state threatened with encirclement: it can join the alliances which encircle it and claim their privileges and protections, the privilege, that is, of impartial judgment in its disputes and protection against war; a defence organised on the principle that an attack on one is an attack on all. The collective alliance offers to others the same protection of law which it claims for itself. The old alliances did not. All forms of the collective method involve the giving of guarantees, undertakings to do certain things in certain circumstances. To say that conversations beforehand as to how these undertakings may best be carried out are dangerous is to condemn the undertakings themselves to unreality. The whole method depends upon the conviction that when the time comes the undertakings really will be fulfilled. It will certainly not add to that conviction upon which the whole system rests if we are to say that previous

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

discussion of the method of carrying it out is never to be permitted.

'It is commonly argued that it was commitments which led to the War of 1914. This is to turn the real lesson of that tragic experience upside down. Some score of states, including great nations like the United States, were drawn into that war with no shadow of previous commitment of any kind. It cannot be said, therefore, that it was previous commitment, or "conversations" which drew them in. It is indeed quite evident that previous clear commitment would have kept them out: If German statesmen had realised beforehand that a certain line of policy would involve the enmity of so vast a combination, that fatal policy would not have been followed, and there would have been no war. If, that is, it had been clear beforehand that the combatants would do what at the last they were obliged to do, they would not have had to do it. To make it quite clear that the preponderant power will be exercised on behalf of the law is to possess the one assurance that it will not be necessary to use that power — not be necessary to go to war.'

§

War for Defence and 'Collective War'

Lord Lothian had been arguing that it was illogical, absurd, dangerous and wicked to 'secure peace by threatening war'. But had also been urging increase of armament. Thereupon the following comment:

'Where do Lord Lothian's conclusions leave us? We are to continue to secure peace by threatening war. That is to say, we are to maintain and increase our national armaments, the very existence of which is a

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

'Lord Lothian's proposed guarantee of French, Belgian, and Dutch frontiers has no justification save on the assumption that the complete domination of Europe by a single power would render us defenceless. But such domination will quite certainly be achieved if there is to be no common resistance, so that democratic and Liberal Europe can be defeated in detail; eaten piecemeal.

'A Mitteleuropa that under the shelter of Western neutrality had by a succession of steps militarised the demilitarised areas, swallowed Austria, disposed of Poland by one means, rendered Czechoslovakia impotent by another, then, in co-operation with Japan, had destroyed the power of Russia and made Ukrania a satellite state, could treat France and the Low Countries pretty much as it might treat Luxembourg or Lichtenstein.

'The game would then really have been played out, and the establishment of Mitteleuropa on the Channel coasts would be almost a minor operation.

'Confronted by the imminence of the event, we should fight; as America fought, finally. Our power might – conceivably – win the war. But it would not have prevented it. We should then discover that we needed allies (including Russia) at all costs, and would make hurried "deals"; "buy" allies as we "bought" Italy by promises which would render a decent peace impossible, and the last *status quo* worse than the previous one. We should be at war because, though, in the last analysis, we will fight when the danger is on our doorstep, we will not undertake so to do beforehand to the end that the danger will not arise. At the root of the war will be the same curious confusion which has bedevilled our relations with France and thrown her into Italian entanglements. We keep on saying, "The French want us to fight." It is the last

MARGINAL NOTES

thing they want – a war on their soil. They want us to say beforehand that we will fight so that no fighting will be necessary. But the undertaking if confined to the West will be valueless as a preventive of war.’

§

‘To Get Peace Redress Grievances’

For months we had heard that if justice could be done to Germany the danger of war would pass. Thus the following letter in the *Times*:

‘When a political theory, or a proposed cure for political evils, is advanced, should not the first test by which to judge it be that of experience, of past results of its application?’

‘It is time to apply that test to the suggestions so repeatedly put forward that the present drift to war is due to maldistribution of the world’s resources; represents a conflict between the haves and the have-nots; is a symptom of what Lord Lothian terms “the economic suffocation of certain nations possessed of inadequate natural resources and markets”, and which Mr. Loftus, supporting Lord Lothian’s view, says is maintained by “intolerable treaties”, adding that before the League can claim our loyalty it must stand for “righteousness and justice”, and cease to deal “with symptoms rather than causes”. Both correspondents, like most who write in this strain, seem to assume that revision of injustices can be made an alternative to collective action under the Covenant, or that in any case no such action ought to be attempted while injustices remain.

‘I suggest that redress of grievances is not an alternative to the collective system, which is, indeed, the indispensable means of revision, the only means by which

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

redress of grievances can be carried out; and that if we could get such redress otherwise, it would not give us peace. Of this last fact we have most positive proof in the tragic experience of the War itself.

‘Assume the most radical revision of the treaties, the most thoroughgoing redistribution of resources. Assume that we could return to Germany, not only all her African colonies and her Eastern stations, but the territory which she possessed in Europe before the War, or some territory equivalent, giving her every resource in potash, ore, coking coal, corresponding to those of Alsace, Silesia, German Poland. We know by experience that if redistribution of resources to that impossible extent could take place we should not, merely by that fact, get peace. For when Germany had all that territory, all those resources, all those outlets, she was a cause of disturbance, and peace was not kept.

‘Lord Lothian, it is true, does not urge territorial revision. He wants the removal of “the barriers which now prevent world development and world trade”, and puts up to scientific economists and statesmen the problem of ensuring peace by a freer international economy.

‘But the world had all those things in 1914; Europe enjoyed economic freedoms which we should to-day regard as almost equivalent to free trade; possessed stable currencies, an international money in the form of gold, relatively free passage of goods and peoples, rights of immigration into undeveloped territories. It had all the conditions which Lord Lothian would now create as an ensurance of peace. And went to war.

‘When the world possessed a largely international economy – much more international and much more stable than the present conditions – it moved away therefrom in a blind striving for certain political objec-

MARGINAL NOTES

tives, mainly defence, national self-preservation. Economic advantages were recklessly sacrificed for that political end, for national power as the sole source of defence in the international anarchy, and would be again, if the choice were between welfare and defence. Unless we can satisfy that political need which comes before all else, the mere satisfaction of economic need will leave the problem unsolved. At a time when Germany had reached a degree of suffering worse than any she had experienced since the blockade, Hitler secured his most passionate response, not by promising to give Germany bread, but by promising to give her arms. We witness the same scale of values to-day: Goering's "Guns are more important than butter", summarises the whole philosophy of anarchic Europe. We ourselves have put it more elegantly: "Defence is more than opulence."

'Defence indeed is more than anything else whatsoever, and redress of grievances does not solve the problem of defence.

'What grievances had Germany against us in 1914, or against France or Russia? Or we against Germany previous to 1914? A dozen historians and statesmen have assured us that not for years had Anglo-German relations been marked by a greater freedom from specific grievance on either side than in 1914. Except, of course, one supreme grievance; Germany's growing power threatened to make us defenceless, to deprive us of all means of defending even our most vital rights. We tried to solve that problem by compelling Germany to occupy the position of manifest inferiority of power we refused to occupy. (To prove to her that our preponderance of power could never work to her detriment we made the Treaty of Versailles.) By that method, if we are secure, Germany is not; if Germany is secure, we are not. The defence of one automatically kills the

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

defence of the other. Until that political dilemma is met, no remedy of economic grievance will meet the situation; or can indeed be effectively applied.

'The existing treaties are certainly unjust – although it is worth note that the nation which has actually gone to war is not one of the vanquished in the late War, not a nation suffering humiliation and injustice, but is one of the victors. But those who call for revision of treaties seem sometimes to assume that the righteousness or justice in international affairs for which Mr. Loftus calls is something self-evident, easily determined, about which all parties concerned are agreed. Whereas opinions differ sincerely, deeply, as to what is justice or righteousness between nations. What is righteousness to a Rumanian or an Italian is intolerable injustice to a Hungarian or Abyssinian, as the case may be. The difficulty is great just because both sides are sincere. It is often the party to a dispute most passionately convinced that he is right, who by all impartial standards is held to be wrong. If the phrase "the League should stand for justice" means anything, it means that the nations which compose it should accept some standard of justice, like third-party judgment in disputes, and agree to defend the principle collectively. 'Failing that, no means of defence compatible with granting to others the rights we claim remains, and all our talk of the League standing for justice is just confusion and obscurantism.'

§

Mr. Shaw and Italy

Mr. Shaw, in the *Times*, had been defending Italy as engaged in a 'mission of civilisation'. So:

'Mr. Bernard Shaw – who describes the Italian invasion of Abyssinia as "an advance of civilisation" – is so

MARGINAL NOTES

impressed with the need of civilising the lawless Danakils, "who kill each other for prestige", that he seems to have overlooked the needs of Europe in that respect; the need, first of all, of civilising the civiliser.

'First things first. From the point of view of European order, which is the more dangerous: barbarism in the African mountains, or cynical repudiation, with complete impunity, by a European state of obligations and rules, the observance of which is indispensable if any sort of a European order is to replace the present international anarchy? Are we to ignore Europe in order to reform Abyssinia?

'Mr. Shaw says:

'The business of the League of Nations is to police the world and put an end to the existing international anarchy.

'Very well. The real purpose of Italy's war is to make that policing impossible, as, indeed, Signor Mussolini has declared quite frankly over and over again. From the first he has taken the position that in this quarrel the League has no *locus standi*, that it is solely Italy's affair. Had he said to the League in effect: "To correct this Abyssinian disorder is your job. Tackle it and we will co-operate," Italy could, with a little patience, have had all that is vital in the way of political and economic security. But Italy has throughout taken the exactly contrary line. Repeatedly she has said to the League: "This is not your job. It is mine. Keep your hands off."

'Throughout this dispute Abyssinia has asked again and again for third-party judgment, undertaking in advance to accept its findings. Italy has as repeatedly rejected third-party judgment. One of the litigants, she claims the right to be the sole judge. One recalls typical proclamation:

'The judges of our necessities and the guarantors

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

of our future are we; only we, exclusively we, and nobody else.

'Signor Mussolini speaks thus because it is not policing but possession which he wants: "Expansion", "Empire", sources of raw material, space for the expanding Italian population – all of which, to give him his due, he has quite frankly avowed. He wants, he or his spokesmen have told us so often, to be free to do in the twentieth what Britain did in the seventeenth or eighteenth century: build up a great Empire. He conceives the League as the real enemy of that project; which, let us hope, it is. For if political methods are never to change, if what one country did in the seventeenth century is to be taken as justifying similar conduct by another country in the twentieth, then let us give up all idea of improvement of any kind, of a League, of a new order, of peace.

'If the League states now refuse to be parties to Italian aggression and stand by the principle of third-party judgment (indispensable to any system of policing), it will amount, says Mr. Shaw, to "stabbing Italy in the back".

'Just what behaviour is the phrase supposed to describe? A nation decides to do something which over its own signature it has recognised as criminal. It comes to its neighbours, and asks them to supply the tools necessary for this act, instruments without which the criminal purpose cannot be carried out. For neighbours to agree to make the crime possible by supplying the indispensable tools, makes them, of course, accessories to it, parties in it. Have they the right to refuse to participate in, to promote, what they regard as an offence which strikes at the very foundation of law and order, of security, including their own security? The offender, addressing fifty-two states (some of them heavily armed), says:

MARGINAL NOTES

'If you refuse to become my partners, to furnish me the tools for pulling off this job, I shall attack you all.

'Is it the part of political wisdom, wise from the point of view of our own future security (I say nothing of courage, justice, morality), to yield to these threats? A great many who have always preached the right and duty of self-defence argue that because the aggressor has threatened to make it hot for us if we organise our defence collectively (on the principle, that is, that an attack on one is an attack on all) we should abandon such defence, yield, confess the complete impotence of the new method. It means surrendering in the face of threats the right to organise our defence co-operatively, to make such alliance as we may deem necessary for that defence. Having successfully faced fifty states, the aggressor may well be encouraged to-morrow to face one, to demand, say, the termination of our alliance with, or position in, Egypt, our command of the Mediterranean. The one and only reason I have ever seen advanced for refraining from the oil sanction is that it might cause the aggressor to attack the organised society of Europe.'

'Shall we best protect that society by letting potential aggressors know that from the moment they threaten to attack it defence of it will cease? Is it on such foundations that that "collective civilisation" of which Mr. Shaw speaks is to be made secure?'

§

The Moral Issue

It was September 1935, the eve of a decision as grave as any that had confronted our people since 1914. Yet newspaper and other discussion indicated

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

that every party—Conservative, Liberal, Labour—was still, at that eleventh hour, divided on the simplest and most relevant moral issue.

Here, in a letter to the *Times*, is an attempt to state that moral issue:

‘For some of us it is an issue which we have had to face with deep heart-searching again and again in the past. Its nature was first brought home to the undersigned forty years ago, when, as an English lad in an American community, he witnessed the effects of President Cleveland’s Venezuelan Message; again in the conflict with the Boers when he stood out against war; again twenty-one years ago when, in your own columns, he ventured to predict that the day would come when the British people would realise that war, entered upon in the international circumstances then prevailing, could not possibly achieve security and peace. What he did not predict, and did not believe possible, was that the very failure of the Great War as a peace-preserving effort would be so misread by much of the succeeding generation as to constitute an obstacle to the establishment of any workable peace system at all.

‘What is that moral issue which constitutes the main point of disagreement at this moment? It is perfectly clear, however we may evade it. Are we justified in using armed power to resist the kind of aggression which we now face? Justified in using armed power to defend the principle of the Covenant? And, if right, is it wise?

‘The division between those who answer “No” and those who answer “Yes” cuts clear across lines of party, creed, class, economic interest. If we have the strange spectacle of Mr. Lansbury joining hands with Lady

MARGINAL NOTES

Houston, Mr. Maxton with Sir Oswald Mosley, the Socialist League with the most Imperialist wing of the Conservative Party, we have also the spectacle of the leaders of the three parties in broad agreement, but all faced by the possibility of revolt by important minorities; minorities animated, I do not doubt for a moment, by the highest motives. It is not intentions which need to be questioned, but judgment.

'The moral objection of the Conservative minority, perhaps the most important, is not to the principle of armed force, since that minority are among the most ardent advocates of greatly increasing our military power. They urge that it is not only a nation's right, but its duty, to defend itself effectively and have the means of doing it. They are for sanctions, but they must be national sanctions, strictly limited to defending ourselves, our interests. But while they believe it right to fight "for defence", they believe it wrong, or that at least there is no obligation, to fight for the Covenant. Which reveals this fact: that they do not look upon the Covenant as a method of defence at all. And there, I suggest, is the root of the confusion both moral and political.

'Those, whether of the Socialist Left or the Conservative Right, who take this attitude, surely turn the moral and political truth upside down. To surrender force for national defence altogether, to accept the political position of lesser states like Norway or Finland, is a morally defensible and understandable position. But to say, "We will use force, but only to defend our own interests and rights," means that we will strive for preponderant power in order to be judge of what those rights are. By that attitude we deny to others the right (of defence by preponderance, of being judge of what defence is) which we claim for ourselves. The method is rooted in denial of right. The last

THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

War arose and failed as defence, because we followed it. It meant that, if we were secure, Germany was not; if Germany secure, we were not.

‘To say that we will not fight for law – the law that settlement of disputes shall not be by the force of one of the litigants – but that we will fight to defend ourselves, means that we make law and effective defence equally impossible, and anarchy and recurrent war equally inevitable.’

INDEX

INDEX

- Abbati, A. H., 123
 Abyssinia,
 British policy towards, 143-58
 Campaign against, 41, 42, 139
 Embargo on arms to, 145
 Italian development of, 130, 131
 Italian policy towards, 129, 135-8,
 144-5
 Offers to League, 143
 African soldiers, training of, 42
 America (see also United States),
 British co-operation with, 92-3,
 105-15, 160
 Naval parity with, 59, 158
 American Union and Democracy, 49
 Anglo-Naval Agreement, 142
 Araki, General, 97

 Bailey, Sir Abe, 133
 Bartlett, Vernon, 165, 166
 Bausman, Frederic, 21, 26
 Belgium, and the Great War, 176-7
 Beaverbrook, Lord, 199
 Blakeslee, Professor, 94, 99
 Bono, Marshal de, 136, 149
 Brailsford, H. N., 131
 British Empire,
 De-imperialisation of, 18-28
 Pre-War conditions for security of,
 89-90
 Relation to monarchy, 29-35

 Capitalism and Imperialism, 26-8
 Chamberlain, Sir Austen, 76, 162
 China,
 Investment in, 94
 Trade in, 93
 Churchill, Winston, 77, 146, 148,
 149

 Colonies,
 Cession of, 84-6
 Population problem of, 23-4
 Communism, 44
 British fear of, 167, 168, 207-8

Daily Express, The, 141, 153, 154
Daily Mail, The, 119-21, 153, 154-7
Daily Telegraph, The, 174, 175
 Davis, Norman, 114
 Defence,
 Collective, 72-4, 91, 135
 Conditions of effective, 58-66, 227
 Federalisation of, 29-30, 46-9
 Objects of, 36-40, 43-9, 66-7
 Dell, Robert, 124
 Democracy,
 And the Great War, 44
 Defence of, 45-6
 And dictatorship, 48
 And unity, 49
 Denny, Ludwell, 25
 Dominions, Independence of, 18-25

 Eden, Anthony, 147, 157
 Egypt, and Italy, 130, 131, 132, 175
Evening Standard, The, 149

 Fascism, 205, 206
 Foch, Marshal, 140
 Forges-Davanzati, Signor, 124
 France, Defence of, 68-70
 Franco, General, 165, 166, 168, 169,
 170, 171, 172, 198
 Franco-Soviet Pact, 200
 Freund, Richard, 129

 Galsworthy, John, 32
 Garvin, J. L., 150, 153, 182, 192

INDEX

- Germany,
 - And colonies, 78, 84
 - Motives of, 74, 75, 76
 - Post-War policy towards, 231-3
 - Post-War power of, 195-7
 - Pre-War British policy towards, 176-9, 225-6, 228
 - Pre-War policy of, 192-3
- Great Britain,
 - Attitude in Far Eastern crisis, 105-15
 - Co-operation with America, 92-3, 105-15, 160
 - Future policy of, 212-4
 - Interpretation of recent policy, 199-201
 - Policy towards Abyssinia, 143-58
 - Pre-War policy of, 176-9, 229
 - Reasons for entering Great War, 176-82, 184-7
- Guérard, Mr., 211
- Hadfield, Senator, 21
- Hailsham, Lord, 118
- Hardinge, Lord, 153
- Hart, Captain Liddell, 126, 127, 198
- Hillson, Norman, 141
- Hitler, Herr, 74, 75, 161, 162, 166, 172, 233
- Haig, Field-Marshal Sir Douglas, 186
- Hoare, Sir Samuel, 147, 156
- Hong Kong, Position of, 103
- Hoover, President, 107
- Hutton, Graham, 103, 104
- Imperialism,
 - And capitalism, 26-8
 - And nationalism, 42-57
- Isolationism, 59, 92
- Italy,
 - And Egypt, 130, 131, 132, 175
 - Military position of, 134
 - Policy of, 130-2
 - Policy towards Abyssinia, 129, 135-8, 234-6
- Japan,
 - Policy in Asia, 95-104
 - Policy in China, 90-1
- Kellogg-Briand Pact, 107, 109
- Laval, M., 139, 140, 142, 147
- Lincoln, Abraham, 48, 49, 57
- Lloyd George, Rt. Hon. D., 64, 128, 140, 143, 168
- Ludendorf, General, 75
- Lytton Commission, Report of, 110, 113
- Mallet, Sir Charles, 223, 224, 226
- Manchester Guardian*, The, 118, 124
- Manchuria, Invasion of, 95
- Matsuoko, Mr., 95
- Mediterranean,
 - As a traffic route, 128
 - British defensive policy in, 125, 126, 132
 - British position in, 129-30, 204-5, 237
 - Italian position in, 130, 131, 169
- Milner, Lord, 128
- Miyako*, 99
- Monroe Doctrine, 47, 95, 96
- Morning Post*, The, 119, 121-2, 153, 157-8
- Morocco, Spanish,
 - German penetration of, 165-6
- Mussolini, Signor, 136, 137, 138, 139, 142, 143, 144, 146, 149, 152, 153, 172, 204
- Nagoya Shinaichi*, 98
- Nationalism, and Imperialism, 42-57
- Naval Conference, London, 1930, 112
- Neutrality Act, 158-9
- News Chronicle*, The, 143, 165
- Nine-Power Treaty, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114
- Non-Resistance, 80-1, 83, 104

INDEX

- O'Brien, E. D., 174
Observer, The, 153, 182
 Olivier, Lord, 133
- Pacifism, 43, 45
 Peace Treaty, *see Treaty of Versailles*
 Philippines, Annexation of, 27
 Protocol, 1924, The, 140
- Reber, Charles, 166
 Reparations, 14, 21
Reynolds News, 131
 Rhineland, German occupation of, 162-3
 Rothermere, Lord, 15, 84, 199
 Ruhr, Invasion of, 15, 17, 69, 79
 Russia,
 Alliance with, 69, 70
 And Europe, 205-7
 Future policy of, 191, 208-10
 Present position of, 190
- Sanctions,
 And war, 150-1, 217-9, 239
 British attitude towards, 115, 116, 119, 238-40
 'Scrutator', 71, 119
 Self-determination, 50, 53, 55
 Seligman, Sir Charles, 117
 Shaw, George Bernard, 234
 Simon, Sir John, 121
 Simonds, Frank D., 24, 123, 129
- Smuts, General, 133, 152
 Spain,
 British policy in, 166-8, 170-1
 German policy in, 163
 Italian policy in, 169
 Statute of Westminster, 21
 Stimson, Henry T., 97, 102, 105-14, 118
Sunday Times, The, 71, 119
- Tada, Major-General, 97
 'Tanaka' Plan, 96-8
Times, The, 112, 113, 118, 130, 137, 152, 153, 170, 178, 186
 Treaty of Locarno, 141
 Treaty of Mutual Assistance, 140
 Treaty of Versailles, 14, 17, 67, 74, 76, 77, 166, 227, 233
 Treaty Ports, position of, 103
 Trotsky, Leon, 26
Truth, 119, 141
- United States,
 And Far Eastern Crisis, 93, 100, 105-14
 Naval Power, 63
 Utley, Freda, 99, 100, 101
- War, The Great,
 Entry of Britain into, 176, 184-5
 Water, Mr. de, 133
 Williams, Sir John Fisher, 219
 Wilson, President, 140
Winnipeg Free Press, 152